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1. INTRODUCTION

In general, this diploma thesis looks at the difficulties of coping with memories by analysing five Irish plays and a film adaptation. It tries to provide an overview of the various strategies which can be used to deal with, and accept, traumatic incidents.

The five Irish plays, Enda Walsh's *The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom* and *Bedbound*, Jimmy Murphy's *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* and Collins's screen adaptation *Kings*, as well as Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*, are analysed by focusing on the characters' different coping techniques.

In the following, coping with traumatic situations, such as murder, imprisonment and guilt will be scrutinised in *The Walworth Farce*. *The New Electric Ballroom* deals with the problem of unrequited love, and Walsh's third play, *Bedbound*, presents traumatic experiences like illnesses and murder. Moreover, a detailed comparison of the play *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* and its film adaptation tries to underline the characters' struggle with their friend's death by examining grief and the stages of mourning. Trauma caused by sexual abuse, rejection and dysfunctional families is illustrated by *On Raftery's Hill*. It is shown how contemporary Irish authors deal with challenging topics affecting the human psyche in their literary works.

The thesis is divided into four main sections, which concentrate on memory and trauma, three plays by Enda Walsh, Jimmy Murphy's play and its film adaptation, as well as Marina Carr's drama. Short summaries of the plays under consideration are provided at the beginning of each chapter. Moreover, the appendix presents a sequence analysis of the film to help the reader follow the analysis and interpretation.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the playwrights present their characters, especially their mental state. The reasons for choosing contemporary Irish plays are that mainly characters are portrayed who have a rough life, and who try to cope with their past by heavy drinking, suicide, and withdrawal from social life.

In Enda Walsh's *The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom* and *Bedbound*, the techniques of storytelling and withdrawal are presented, while the problems of coping with death are illustrated by Jimmy Murphy's *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* and Tom Collins' screen adaptation *Kings*. Further coping techniques, such as alcoholism, are exemplified in Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*.

2. MEMORY AND TRAUMA – A SHORT DEFINITION

2.1 *Memory*

Since the major focus of this thesis is coping with memories, it is essential to have a closer look at the meaning of memory. Memory is a process of acquiring, storing, retaining and retrieving information. The system of human memory, however, is not so easy as it might appear at first glance. A great number of scientists have investigated memory and presented their individual definitions of this complex system.

The psychologist Alan Baddeley states that “[h]uman memory is a system for [processing], storing and retrieving information [that is] acquired through our senses” (Baddeley 9). Visual and auditory as well as smell, taste and touch stimuli are processed and remembered in distinct processing and memory stages, of which the briefest ones last for only fractions of a second. A differentiation is made between short-term and long-term memory (Baddeley 9).

Memory changes and develops throughout our life span. Several studies investigate the memory of infants, even though it is more content-dependent than that of adults. Memory strategies separate memory in children from memory in adults. The more knowledge is acquired, the better material can be organised and remembered and memory performance is increased. Due to aging, however, memory seems to decline gradually (Neath, and Surprenant 342).

According to Aleida Assmann “every form of memory [...] is divided into what is remembered and what is forgotten, excluded, rejected, temporally inaccessible, [or] buried” (Assmann 2004: 32). One unique characteristic of humans is the ability to memorise events. Without memory people could not build up their selves and could not communicate with others. Only a small amount of memory is expressed through language. The majority of it is hidden somewhere deep inside us waiting to be rediscovered. The individual memory is characterised by being perspectivistic, linked to others’ memories, fragmented and fragile and unstable (Assmann 2006: 24-25).

Every ‘I’ is connected to a ‘we’ (i.e. groups people –voluntarily or not – belong to, e.g. family, ethnic groups, nation, religion) from which the base for its own identity is taken (Assmann 2006: 21). The memory of an individual comprises more than his/her own experiences. Individual memory and collective memory have always been interlaced

(Assmann 2006: 23). Assmann agrees with Günter Grass that there is a dichotomy between individual and collective memory, but she is not content with the term 'collective memory'. For this reason, she presents four formats of memory: individual memory, social memory, political memory and cultural memory. Assmann states that people's individual memories interact with social memory, because memories are shared with family members, friends, neighbours and even contemporaries whom one might have never seen or met before. Some social psychologists also mention a generational memory, meaning that generations – groups of individuals of the same age bracket – share a common frame of beliefs, values or habits (Assmann 2004: 21-23). Assmann emphasises that

[i]ndividual and social memory cling to and abide with human beings and their embodied interaction; political and cultural memory, on the other hand, are based on the more durable carriers of symbols and material representations [...] that can be passed on from generation to generation (Assmann 2004: 25).

Political memory, Assmann's third format of memory, is interested in the role of memory on the level of ideology formation. Memory of individuals, however, differs from institutions or larger social groups, because they do not 'have' a memory but rather construct one with the aid of memorial signs. The aim is to strengthen a positive self-image of a political party or a country. This means that especially victorious events of the past are remembered, whereas defeats are passed over or even forgotten (Assmann 2004: 25-26).

The fourth format of memory is cultural memory. Forgetting is always easier than remembering events, because it requires much effort and special measures (Assmann 2004: 31). Remembering and forgetting are intertwined, because what has been forgotten is not lost forever but can be made accessible again (Assmann 2006: 55). All cultures have found ways of passing on vital information to the next generation. Material media of memory, such as letters, photographs or books, try to assure that the data will be remembered and impede the process of forgetting (Assmann 2004: 31).

Van der Kolk presents an effective technique in order to remember new information – repetition. The new data are tied to the already processed and stored data, which makes it easier to memorise new information (Van der Kolk 169-170).

Despite the fact that memories are constantly reconstructed, Aleida Assmann is of the opinion that there are stabilizers of memory. The most significant stabilizer definitely is language, because information can be imparted orally. She, however, focuses on three

internal stabilizers: affect, symbol and trauma. Affects and symbols help remembering events more easily, while trauma stabilizes an encrypted experience (Assmann 2003: 15-24). Traumatic memories, such as sexual abuse, incest or war, are also referred to as 'false memories' because of their uncertainty of reliability. Those memories can be preserved for decades and be reactivated (Assmann 2003: 24). "Traumatic events, however, can neither be remembered nor forgotten, they linger in a cryptic state", because they destabilize identity (Assmann 2003: 26).

It can be seen that human memory is a highly complex process, which allows people to return to their lost past and to create a connection between the past, the present and the future. Sometimes memory is repressed and seems to vanish completely. So, although excavating and rediscovering memory can be quite problematic, it still exists somewhere in the unconsciousness. By using language, memories can be transferred into the present. Forgotten life stories can be uncovered either by psychoanalysis, strategies of mourning, as in *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road*, or by fantasising, storytelling or daydreaming, as in *The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom* or *Bedbound*. The ability to tell coherent stories is strongly linked with people's identity, because memories are always something very personal and connected with feelings. Narrating events over and over again is a therapeutic method to cope with the past and finally to accept it.

2.2 Trauma

The focus of this thesis is on coping with memory, so it is worthwhile to investigate what causes these challenging memories. Traumatic events can have a strong impact on people's psyche. These events recur again and again, which makes it difficult for the patients to cope with. The characters in the plays under consideration had traumatic experiences and create individual coping strategies. This section shortly examines trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The term 'trauma' derives from the Greek and means 'wound'. In medicine the term has commonly been used for 'injury', however, the meaning has slightly changed. Nowadays 'trauma' is mainly used for psychological wounds, which are caused by extreme violence that harms people's minds. In order to survive this harmful experience a defence mechanism has been developed, which is called 'dissociation'. The strategy is to distance the threatening experience from the consciousness. Symptoms of trauma

appear only years after the traumatic incident and the victim's personality is often impaired for a long period of time. In therapy it is essential to excavate the hidden memories, make them conscious again and be able to talk about them (Assmann 2006: 93-94).

From Assmann's point of view, 'trauma' is exclusively linked to the perspective of victims. This means that a major characteristic of trauma is the suffering caused by physical or psychological violence. In her opinion, perpetrators cannot be traumatised, because they have the power over people inferior to them and are not at the mercy of anybody else (Assmann 2006: 95).

Psychoanalyst Franz Kaltenbeck illustrates that people suffering from trauma have severe problems in talking about their dramatic experiences:

We recognise a trauma by the difficulties the traumatised person has when it comes to telling what happened to him/her. It is not easy to communicate a traumatic experience to another person. The difficulty may even turn into impossibility so that people not involved in the events often deny what happened. The survivors of the concentration camps[, for example,] were not only faced with the resistance of language when they tried to express their sufferings. Very often those to whom they addressed their accounts would not listen to them (Kaltenbeck 253).

The effect of traumatic incidents on memory has been investigated in a number of studies: "individuals who have suffered severe trauma show heightened recall of certain aspects of the event, with other aspects being either poorly recalled or forgotten" (Howes 302). Trauma patients often have difficulties in learning and noticing events in the world around them. A prominent feature of trauma are flashbacks, which means that vivid images of the traumatic incident come back suddenly and the past unfolds in the present, which cannot be controlled by the individual (Howes 302). The memories of traumatic events are usually "[...] perceived in fragments, as hyper-vivid images, and are accompanied by strong emotions" (Howes 302).

Some traumatised individuals suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), if the traumatic symptoms persist (Howes 303). PTSD can be caused by stressors such as war, torture, natural disasters, severe motor vehicle accidents, large-scale transport accidents (e.g. airline crashes), life-threatening illnesses, sexual and physical assault, (childhood) sexual abuse, or domestic violence. The degree of suffering from PTSD depends on the traumatic event as well as on the individual's response, environment, resources, and life history. Negative responses, e.g. anger, shame and guilt, most probably increase the risk of post-traumatic reactions (Briere 7; 11-24; 32; 37).

Memories related to traumatic events may undergo repression (Howes 305). In his studies, Sigmund Freud found out that some information is repressed, meaning that memories with unpleasant emotional associations are likely to be forgotten (Baddeley 273). In other words, “[...] powerful negative emotions can induce amnesia [...]” (Baddeley 274). Psychogenic amnesia mainly occurs in connection with stress and violent crimes, such as homicide (Baddeley 279-280).

Cathy Caruth explains post-traumatic stress disorder as a reaction to a dramatic event in the form of recurring hallucinations, dreams or nightmares, thoughts or behaviour against the person’s will. Post-traumatic stress disorder is closely tied to one specific event and these flashbacks exactly resemble the actual event that caused the trauma. During the actual overwhelming situation the person is not entirely conscious. For this reason, experiences are not taken in at the time and can be forgotten for a certain period called latency, only to return later on. Trauma initially helps to escape the awful experience; however, the past has to be accounted for (Caruth 3-11).

Caruth states that the “phenomenon of trauma [...] brings us to a limit of our understanding” because of the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience (Caruth 4). She emphasises that every event has different effects on different people, which means that some people are more traumatised by the same event than others. Traumatized people do not experience a distortion of the event but re-experience its structure (Caruth 4). Being traumatised can be defined as being “possessed by an image or event” (Caruth 4-5).

According to Bessel Van der Kolk, trauma implies the danger that dramatic memories hinder people from getting on with their lives. As a consequence, subconscious memories may control people’s behaviour. The worst case would be to suffer from multiple personality disorder, which means that the patient’s mind splits into several identities. Moreover, memories are often ignored or apparently forgotten despite the fact that they are still in the unconscious. In other words, those memories are repressed (Van der Kolk 158-168).

In the following the different traumatic events (e.g. death, suicide, illnesses, sexual abuse, incest, or unrequited love) as well as the coping strategies of the characters of the five Irish plays under consideration will be examined in more detail.

3. ENDA WALSH

3.1 *The Writer*

The Irish playwright Enda Walsh was born in Dublin in 1967 (Barnett 2). He is one of Ireland's most widely performed, most innovative and exciting contemporary playwrights (Nakase, and Stack 126). At school Walsh was taught by the English teacher Roddy Doyle (1958 -), one of the most famous contemporary Irish writers (Munster Literature Centre 1). In an interview with *The Guardian* Walsh says that he was influenced by Doyle, because all their school plays were adaptations Doyle had written himself (Barnett 1).

In general, Enda Walsh is motivated by characters "on the edge of madness" (Logan 1). His works deal with relationships and his plays are about "the small mystery of getting up in the morning and living a life" (Barnett 1).

Enda Walsh has surprisingly little faith in words. He says that "[i]t takes [him] a thousand words to say three words" (Sellar 1). So, speaking is also difficult for his characters who try to articulate their lives, for example in *Bedbound*. He thinks that theatre is more than just people talking. In *The Walworth Farce*, for example, the lines spoken make up only about 30 per cent of the play. The rest is performance. Theatre is written on stage and not just in the writer's head (J. Taylor 1). Walsh's plays are mainly about himself and his constant struggle to make words work for him (Logan 3).

When Walsh moved to Cork he started working with the theatre company Corcadorca in the mid-1990s (Sellar 2). Walsh's first successful play was *The Ginger-Ale Boy* (1995). The play is set in Cork and is about an ordinary young man called Bobby who discovers he has talent and ambition, but finds it hard to fulfil his dreams. According to *The Guardian*, Walsh admits that it was not perfect, but it got him noticed (Barnett 1; FitzGibbon 474).

In fact, Walsh concedes that most of the theatre he created in Cork was awful. At the end of the performance he usually asked the audience for their opinions and their ideas for improvement. For him the best way to improve his plays was to cooperate with the audience (J. Taylor 1).

One of his most successful productions, *Disco Pigs*, was put on stage at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in 1996. The play has been translated into all major European languages (Gardner 2001: 2). It was inspired by a relationship he once had with a girl, and so it is a story about teenage love. The main characters are the 17-year-olds Pig and Runt. But its most interesting element is the artificial language that Walsh invented himself. That language relies almost exclusively on colloquialisms. The language should thus allow free movement between the internal and the external (Haughey 128). After *Disco Pigs* he moved to London and got married to Jo Ellison, the editor of *Vogue* magazine (J. Taylor 2).

When Enda Walsh was a boy, he did not seem to grow. He was quite tiny compared with the huge world that surrounded him. That was why crowds on busy streets or at football matches made him feel panicky. His claustrophobia influenced his play *Bedbound* (2000), which was his first self-directed play. The story is about a father and his crippled daughter who suffer from polio and who are both bedridden. The play is based on Walsh's relationship with his own father, who was a successful furniture salesman just like the character in the play. His father believed in the importance of work and so does Walsh. The crippled daughter in the play is based on Enda Walsh himself, because Walsh always had problems expressing himself. Actually the relationship between Enda Walsh and his father is shown. His father was incredibly touched that Enda had written a play for him (Gardner 2001: 2-3). In 2000, his father died from cancer when the play was in rehearsal (Costa 2).

In 2006, *The Walworth Farce* was put on stage at the Druid Theatre in Galway. Similar to Walsh's own fixed daily routine, the characters in *The Walworth Farce* act in a very structured way. Hence, this play again reflects some of the author's habits (J. Taylor 2).

The New Electric Ballroom (2008) is a feminised version of *The Walworth Farce*. It is about three adult sisters who live in a house in an Irish coastal town. Just like the men in *The Walworth Farce*, the women never leave their house and daily re-enact their life-story. It is mainly about their memories, wishes, dreams and frustrated hopes. Owing to his previous plays but especially because of the success of *The New Electric Ballroom* Walsh is one of the most innovative and exciting contemporary Irish playwrights (Nightingale 1). In an interview with Cahir O'Doherty, Walsh says that he sometimes does not know where *The New Electric Ballroom* is going, so it still surprises him and he is actually content with his play. Like most of his theatre plays, it illustrates Walsh's

own anxieties. Daily patterns and routines sometimes negatively influence our lives and make it impossible to enjoy life (O'Doherty 1-2). "Everything [his] characters go through is the kind of thing [he] really really fear[s] happening" (O'Doherty 2).

According to *The New York Times*, Enda Walsh "has a breathtaking lyrical gift capable of encompassing daft humor and spine-chilling truths in language that still remains powerfully real" (Isherwood 1). *The New Electric Ballroom* is said to be a "mordantly funny, weirdly transfixing" comedy, but a bit bleaker than its companion piece, *The Walworth Farce*. The main characters Breda and Clara continually talk to convince themselves that they are alive. However, by doing so, they avoid truly living. Re-enacting the fatal event seems to be the only way to endure the pain and their desolate lives. On the one hand, Breda and Clara hate the world with its cruel gossip, but on the other hand, chatting away helps them cope with their frustration (Isherwood 1). Therefore, "language is both damnation and salvation, a force that divides people irrevocably but also promises the hope of connection" (Isherwood 2).

In *The Times* (Logan 3) Walsh commented on his passion for writing and stated, "Writing is the only thing I can do, and I f***ing love it! I'll continue writing for myself primarily. And as long as a good number of people are interested too, then I'm happy."

The following chapters concentrate on Enda Walsh's plays *The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom* and *Bedbound*. The analysis considers in particular the subject of coping with memories and trauma through therapeutic techniques such as storytelling and repetition in order to get over feelings of guilt. The following chapters provide short plot summaries of *The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom* and *Bedbound*, and deal with traumatic experiences of the protagonists, their psychological problems and the coping strategy of storytelling.

3.2 The Walworth Farce – An Example of Coping with Traumatic Events

3.2.1 Plot Summary

Walsh's play *The Walworth Farce* only consists of four characters. Dinny, a fifty-year-old Irishman, lives with his two sons Blake and Sean, who are both in their twenties, in a council flat in South London. The time is the mid-1990s. As the title suggests it is a

farce about a family who lives on the Walworth Road. The three men daily re-enact their migration from Cork to London. About twenty years previously, Dinny stabbed his brother Paddy and his sister-in-law Vera with a kitchen knife, because he did not want to share their mother's heritage. Sean, the youngest son, witnessed parts of the crime. His memories, however, have been repressed for about twenty years due to his father's repeated lies. Dinny had to leave his wife Maureen, fled to London and has lived in his brother's flat on the Walworth Road ever since. Maureen sent Blake and Sean to stay with their father in England. Dinny always tried to keep his sons safe and locked them away from reality. 24-year-old Sean, however, starts to doubt his father's version of the story. The father cannot cope with his deeds and tries to overcome his memories by performing a modified version of his escape from Cork.

The play, however, mainly presents Dinny's story through the use of farce. He has locked his sons in the flat since their arrival in London. Only Sean is allowed to leave their flat each day to purchase the stage props needed for the play. In the farce Dinny claims to be an affluent brain surgeon, who lives in a cosy flat in London. His actual profession, however, is painting and decorating and he is just in the flat, which is Jack and Eileen Cotter's property, in order to paint the walls. According to Dinny and Paddy's mother's will, the more sensible brother is to deal with her money and inherit half of her fortune at once. The rest is to be paid monthly into the other brother's account. Since Dinny is greedy he pretends to be wealthy in order to get all the money. Unfortunately, Paddy detects the intrigue. Dinny later discovers that his mother's death is extraordinarily connected to the death of Eileen Cotter's father. Jack Cotter and his brother-in-law Peter want to run off with their dead father's money without Eileen's knowledge. However, Maureen eavesdrops on their conversation and tells her husband Dinny about it. Jack Cotter tries to poison his wife Eileen and Peter with a chicken. In the end Eileen dies due to the poisoned chicken, Jack dies by drinking poisoned beer, Paddy dies because of a hole in his back, and Vera and Peter die because of food poisoning. As a result Dinny takes possession of all the money.

One day, however, the farce fails because of an intruder. When Sean arrives back home with the shopping, he realises that he has taken the wrong bag with him. The talkative, 24-year-old, black English Tesco-girl Hayley realises the mistake and returns the right bag. She seems to like Sean, but Sean does not know how to behave in a real-life situation. Unfortunately, Dinny is afraid of her, because he is not used to any company

beside his sons. Then Hayley is forced to perform the role of Dinny's wife, Maureen, who has to prepare the chicken. She is terrified of the bizarre situation. Realising that she has to join in the farce, she even invents a new line, which Dinny enjoys. That day offers the perfect chance to escape from the house. Before Blake stabs his father, he makes sure that Hayley wants to stay with Sean. Sean, however, thinks he wants to murder the girl and kills his brother. Terrified, Hayley flees from the flat. Although he has the chance to leave as well, Sean stays in the flat and re-enacts the farce once again.

3.2.2 Enda Walsh's Motivation to Write *The Walworth Farce*

Like almost all of his plays, *The Walworth Farce* shows similarities to Walsh's lifestyle. Walsh realised that he lived his life according to a special schedule. Everything happened at the same time each day. His daily pattern influenced the play under consideration, because the characters live in an extremely structured way (J. Taylor 2). This is shown by Dinny's statement that "[they]'re making a routine that keeps [their] family safe" (Walsh, *Walworth Farce* 69)¹. He simply cannot accept the truth about being a murderer and desperately tries to have an imaginary, proper and intact family. Like every family member Sean, the younger son, is stuck in the pattern, but he is at least allowed to leave the flat. "[He's] in at ten o'clock every morning getting the same food for the story" (WF 33).

Walsh's farce, "a play which evokes laughter by such devices of low comedy as physical buffoonery, rough wit, or creation of ridiculous situations" (Beckson 88), is his reaction to the "immigrant play", which is a popular genre of Irish theatre. Those plays are normally set in a pub, the characters think about home and get drunk (J. Taylor 2). Murphy's *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* is one example of this genre.

Farcical elements are plentiful in *The Walworth Farce*. Just to name one example, the death of Dinny's mother is quite extravagant. "Hit by a dead horse. Who would have believed it? [...] It was God's will to send a massive dead stallion careering over a hedge" (WF 7-8). Their late mother cannot be buried, because the gravedigger does not have a digger (WF 14) and so they put the coffin into the dining room (WF 8). Interestingly enough, this exceptional death is connected to, and even caused by, another equally unbelievable death. While speeding, Eileen's father "hits that bloody

¹ All the following quotations abbreviated as WF (*The Walworth Farce*) are taken from Enda WALSH, *The Walworth Farce* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007).

sea lion. [...] The speedboat [is] thrown into the air and [...] [travels] through that field [...]. The horse coming from nowhere. He hits the horse [...] sending it careering over a hedge and onto a quiet country road..." (WF 26-27). "That very same horse [crushes Dinny's] mummy as she [picks] gooseberries" (WF 67).

The Walworth Farce focuses on Dinny's desire for his home town Cork, and the three male characters have Cork City accents (WF 7). This is illustrated by Blake, who claims that "[d]ad all talk of Ireland [...]. Everything's Ireland. His voice is stuck in Cork so it's impossible to forget what Cork is. [...] This story [they] play is everything" (WF 22). In Dinny's opinion, "[Ireland] gives fools a fighting chance" (WF 9) compared to unfair London. Cork seems to be the most precious city of the world. He describes Cork City as "Ireland's jewel [...]. For it is, really and truly, Ireland's true capital city" (WF 16).

Walsh has always been motivated by characters that are on the edge of madness. He thinks a playwright should bring the audience close to characters they do not want to feel close to. For example, most people were shocked after hearing of the "Josef Fritzl case in Austria" – a man who imprisoned his daughter for 24 years. But not Enda Walsh (Logan 2). This 'real-life incident' "backed up" his dramatic intentions to put madness on stage. Critics often questioned the plausibility of Walsh's characters. The Fritzl story, however, shows that his characters are not just weird fantasies. The Fritzl case could best be compared with *The Walworth Farce*, because a tyrannical Irishman keeps his two sons locked in a flat in London for about 20 years (Costa 1).

3.2.3 Murder as a Traumatic Event

The farce emerges from a rather traumatic incident in Ireland, where Dinny killed two of his relatives. The traumatic event and its consequences shall be examined in this section.

The Walworth Farce presents an extremely traumatic situation. Dinny, who murdered his brother Paddy and his sister-in-law Vera because of greed, is an excellent example of a traumatised person. He is unable to cope with his deed and lives with a lie, in other words the farce, instead. His behaviour is controlled by his subconscious memories and he cannot go on with his normal life.

As has been illustrated above, repetition is an effective technique to remember new information. By repeating the untruth again and again, Dinny starts to believe it himself. He literally forces his sons to perform the farce daily to make them believe the story. He even turns violent because of Sean's mistake of taking the wrong shopping bag and "swings the frying pan across the back of Sean's head [and] Sean hits the floor fast" (WF 20).

Dinny feels guilty and has severe problems coping with his greed and the murder. In order to suppress the haunting images of his deed, he flees into storytelling (see Chapter 3.5.1). His brother Paddy knows that Dinny tried to cheat him with the will and is understandably angry: "You know of the terrible poverty me and Vera are under. You whisk us up here [...], spin out Mammy's will and fob me off with a monthly allowance and three cans of Harp. Shame on you!" (WF 65). In order to inherit most of his mother's money, Dinny invents the story of being a successful surgeon. His ambition to become rich finally destroys his whole family. He needs the safety of a regular pattern in his daily life and therefore, he continuously acts out the farce. The intruder, Hayley, however changes the story in the end.

Dinny's younger son, Sean, is also traumatised, because he partly witnessed his father's crime. He recalls that

[t]here's shouting from inside the house. [Dad] and Uncle Paddy screaming at each other. Fighting over Granny's money even before she's stuck in the ground. Aunty Vera crying her cries real high like a baby crying. [Dad's] voice so much bigger than Uncle Paddy and him saying, 'No Dinny, no please, Dinny!' (*Slight pause.*) And then we hear Mammy screaming, Dad. We're both up fast and running through our back door and into our kitchen and the smell of the roast chicken. Her screaming coming from the sitting room and Blake won't go inside 'cause he's frightened of what he might see. But I do. I do go inside. And Mammy grabs me and spins me around fast so I can't see ... but I see Uncle Paddy and Aunty Vera on the ground and I see you standing in the corner with blood all over your hands (WF 58-59).

As the years have passed by, they have re-enacted the farce over and over again, which leads to the repression of Sean's overwhelming memory of the dead bodies. When the farce finally goes wrong, he breaks through latency, remembers the past and tells his brother that "[he] saw him [...]. [He] saw the blood that day! It's all lies!" (WF 57). Blake, however, does not want to hear the true story. Then Sean confronts his father and explains that "[he] see[s] Uncle Paddy and Aunty Vera on the ground and [he] see[s] [Dinny] standing in the corner with blood all over [his] hands" (WF 59). A short conversation about Dinny's parenting methods follows, but it is clear that Sean disagrees with his father's way of keeping them safe (WF 59). He is the only one who

leaves the flat and experiences reality for a short time, which increases his desire to stop the farce and to talk to Hayley.

The trauma deriving from Dinny's murder finally causes a chain of murders, as Blake stabs his father (WF 83) thinking that Dinny intended to harm Hayley. In order to prevent that crime and to give his brother Sean the chance of living with that girl, he murders Dinny. "BLAKE *fires the knife into DINNY's back. DINNY gasps. BLAKE pulls out the knife, turns DINNY towards him quickly and stabs him in the stomach hard*" (WF 83). Everything goes really fast. Therefore, Sean believes that his brother wants to kill Hayley. Instinctively, Sean tries to protect the girl and in the heat of the moment stabs Blake. "SEAN *runs from the wardrobe and drives his knife into BLAKE's stomach*" (WF 83). Only then Sean realises what has happened and what his brother has done. Blake might have done this on purpose. It seems that he wanted to set an end to his miserable life after having saved Hayley. This is Sean's chance to leave and start a new life, which is illustrated by Blake's last words: "Now leave, love" (WF 84). However, the chain of murder does not bring a happy end to the story. Hayley flees terrified from the place, leaving Sean behind, who is unable to just walk out of the flat into a world without the farce. That is why he continues acting and retelling the story (WF 84-85).

It can be seen that the traumatic event of committing a murder or witnessing the same crime leads to severe psychological problems. The characters are unable to carry on living and the play ends in a tragedy.

3.2.4 Withdrawal from Society – A Coping Strategy

In *The Walworth Farce* Enda Walsh presents a father and his two sons who are isolated from the world outside. After the traumatic experience of killing two of his relatives, Dinny is afraid of leaving the "council flat on the Walworth Road, South London" (WF 5). His son, Blake, has not been outside for years. Only the youngest son, Sean, goes to the supermarket and does the shopping regularly. The withdrawal from society appears to be an effective coping technique for Dinny, however, it does not work for his sons.

The father hides from his mental problems, thinking the farce is a good strategy to deal with his guilt. He is totally unable to face any changes in his daily routine. This is illustrated when he tells Sean: "We're making a routine that keeps our family safe" (WF

69). When Hayley, the shop assistant, intervenes one day, Dinny is absolutely focused on the farce:

HAYLEY (*hesitantly*). Is Sean in? It's just he took the wrong shopping. This is his one.

The three just look at her. [...]

SEAN *wants to disappear. He looks at the floor.*

She enters out of the rain. BLAKE moves back from her. [...]

DINNY. Is there a cooked chicken and a sliced pan in there?

HAYLEY. Yeah. And two packets of pink wafers and ... well what you usually get.

A pause.

DINNY. Can you cook?

HAYLEY. Why? Is this like *Ready Steady Cook* or something?! [...]

She laughs.

DINNY *just stares through her and waits for her to stop laughing.*

She stops laughing.

DINNY. Can you cook?

HAYLEY *a little awkward now.*

HAYLEY. Yeah. (WF 40)

Blake and Sean seem to be in discomfort with the new situation. Sean fears that his father could be furious because of the intruder and just stares at the floor. Blake, on the other hand, does not know how to behave in presence of someone not belonging to their little family. So, he distances from the girl. It is his task to open the door to her. “BLAKE *walks towards the front door and begins to undo the many locks*” (WF 39). The locks illustrate the family's fear of the world outside. They do not want to let anybody inside their little universe. Dinny, however, is not much surprised about the visitor. He desperately wants to continue acting. He promptly asks her about her cooking skills and makes her a new character in the farce.

The Tesco-girl, Hayley, appears to like Sean, otherwise she would not have brought him the right shopping bag. She has noticed the particularities in Sean's behaviour and knows he is different to other men:

A creature of habit, aren't you? Oven-cooked chicken, white sliced bread, yeah? ... Creamy milk, two packets of pink wafers, six cans of Harp and one cheesy spread. The other girls think you're an idiot but I was saying that there's a lot of sense to it. All the options that people have these days ... it's all very confusing. If you're happy with your lifestyle and what you eat, why change? (WF 43)

Sean, however, is unable to cope with this new experience of being loved by a girl. He does not know what to do. At the end of the play he has the chance to leave the flat together with Hayley, however, he somehow feels connected to the flat and the farce.

He is unable to leave and start anew. So, he just stays inside and re-enacts the farce (WF 84-85).

Dinny is stubborn to bring the farce to an end. He threatens Hayley and forces the girl to stay at their flat and join the farce:

Irritated, HAYLEY grabs her coat and bag and leaves the kitchen and heads for the front door.

DINNY looks at her as she tries to open the locks on the door.

HAYLEY (*exasperated*). Oh open the fucking door!

DINNY suddenly pounces on her and grabs her by the throat, pinning her to the door. He takes her bag and throws it to one side.

SEAN and BLAKE come out from the kitchen and stand by, watching.

DINNY. Don't scream now.

HAYLEY, terrified, looks towards SEAN. [...]

DINNY. Just do what I asked and you won't be hurt. (WF 50-51)

Dinny intimidates Hayley and she feels totally helpless. Not even the brothers come to save her, even though she gives Sean a terrified look. The girl is confused because of the strange happenings and Sean's weird father. Dinny does not notice the girl's uneasiness at all. He only wants to control the situation and re-enact the lie that he has told his sons for years.

Dinny is the only one who enjoys living with the farce. He is content with telling the same lie year after year. His sons, however, are desperate to set an end to this lifestyle. At least Sean can leave the flat to meet Hayley at the cashier's desk at Tesco's. Blake, on the other hand, has severe problems staying inside for such a long time. At the end of Act II he tries to enable his brother a better life and so he kills their father (WF 83). The play has a tragic twist and Blake is stabbed by Sean (WF 83). Blake cannot escape from the desperate situation, but an end is set to his meaningless life. Sean, the only remaining family member, is unable to face society and keeps withdrawing.

3.3 The New Electric Ballroom – An Example of Coping with Traumatic Events

3.3.1 Plot Summary

The New Electric Ballroom is a play about three Irish sisters who hardly ever leave their house. Breda and Clara, who are in their sixties, and Ada, who is forty years old, live

together in a fishing village on the coast somewhere in Ireland. Ada is the only one of the sisters who leaves the house and works in the office of a cannery.

The elder sisters' past in the 1950s is presented in a play-within-the-play which tells the audience from two different perspectives – Clara's and Breda's – how they became heartbroken, depressed and lonely. It all begins with a night at the new discotheque called 'The New Electric Ballroom', which is about ten miles away from where they live. Both of them are excited as they get ready for going out. When they have finally chosen their clothes and make-up they ride their bikes to the new disco. Both Clara and Breda have a date with the rock star Roller Royle, however, neither knows of the other's date. When Clara walks into Roller Royle's backstage room, she finds him kissing her sister. She immediately bursts into tears. Breda's heart, on the other hand, is broken too, as Roller Royle disappears with a Doris Day-like woman. Each of the sisters wants to be kissed properly for the first time, but both are strongly disappointed by the same man. From that day on they never had another relationship and have stayed safely inside the house.

The fourth character of the play is the fishmonger Patsy who brings fresh fish every day – regular as the tide. He loves to tell the latest news and gossip from the village residents, however, he is not at all welcome at the sisters' house. He falls in love with the youngest sister Ada. Whilst they are acting out Breda's point of view of the date with Roller Royle, he interrupts and it is revealed that Patsy actually is the son of Roller Royle and the Doris Day-like woman. Clara and Breda are shocked, but see Patsy in a new light. Unfortunately, due to the negative comments concerning Patsy's character and appearance he decides not to have a relationship with Ada. So in the end, all three sisters suffer from a broken heart.

3.3.2 Unrequited Love as a Traumatic Event

One major theme in *The New Electric Ballroom* is love – or to be more precise – broken hearts. The three sisters, especially Breda and Clara, suffer from unrequited love and still wait to be kissed properly, because none of their previous relationships ever came to anything. This chapter tries to illuminate the longing to be loved and to find the perfect partner and the problems that come with romantic relationships.

Elaine Hatfield and Richard Rapson (1993) felicitously explain the problems that come along with love as follows:

In modern Western civilization, most people enter love affairs with unbounded hope – believing they have found the perfect mate, imagining ever-thrilling sex, and fantasizing a happy marriage – only to see their joyous dreams turn into a nightmare of disappointment, dashed expectations, and lost faith. In the beginning, passionate love’s euphoria feeds delightful conversations with friends and a joyful engagement with life. The end of love leaves people stunned; baffled about what has gone wrong. Lots of men and women have gone through this cycle many, many times (Hatfield, and Rapson 1).

Walsh’s *The New Electric Ballroom* examines these aspects of trying to find love with all the characteristics belonging to it from initial excitement and fantasies to bitter disappointment and suffering. Just like hundreds of other people the characters go through unhappy love affairs and try to cope with frustration, however, they are incapable of living on like other people do.

Hatfield and Rapson distinguish passionate love from companionate love. The former is defined as a “hot”, intense emotion, which might also be called lovesickness, infatuation or being-in-love. It is referred to as an intense longing for union with another (Hatfield, and Rapson 5). In contrast, companionate love is defined as “a “warm,” far less intense emotion [which] combines feelings of deep attachment, commitment, and intimacy” (Hatfield, and Rapson 8).

The play under consideration focuses mainly on passionate love due to the deep teenage wish to have a boyfriend and to be kissed the first time (“a girl who’s yet to be kissed. Properly kissed” (Walsh, *The New Electric Ballroom* 14)²). Clara, for instance, describes her excitement of the band member Roller Royle, with whom she is totally in love: “[Butterflies] carry me down stairs. The soles of my feet tingling ‘cause of ‘him’. The top of my head all fizz! It’s my time” (NEB 15). Moreover, the play mainly deals with lovesickness, rejection and jealousy.

Companionate love is less evident in *The New Electric Ballroom*, because it characterises the love between best friends without their thinking of a sexual relationship. The love between the sisters could in a way be described as companionate love, but they are still suffering from the betrayal and they do not have a very good relationship due to jealousy. Even in infancy Breda envied her sister and had an aversion towards her, “Stuck in the pram, the lumpen pig. Sat opposite me, Mother’s little gargoyle...” (NEB 32). Senger assumes that the relationship between siblings influences the way they are able to cope with separation from a partner. The more hostility is experienced between siblings, the more problems appear when dealing with

² All the following quotations abbreviated as NEB (*The New Electric Ballroom*) are taken from Enda WALSH, *The New Electric Ballroom* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2008).

a separation (Senger 176). The arrival of a brother or a sister is a dramatic change in the life of the firstborn, because it experiences separation anxiety, jealousy and hostility towards the new-born. The mother seems to prefer the new-born baby since it needs far more attention. An adult has far more problems dealing with a broken relationship when the bond between the siblings is not very tight (Senger 178).

Finding the right partner, however, involves a lot of difficulties for both men and women. On the one hand, they face the problem of recognizing what it takes to attract potential mates, dates and friends. On the other hand, it is hard to consider a strategy for meeting potential lovers (Hatfield, and Rapson 10). Most people search for a partner who “is reasonably good looking, personable, warm, and intelligent; someone whose views match our own; and perhaps even more” (Hatfield, and Rapson 11). This means that physical appearance is crucial for selecting one’s true love. It is widely believed that good-looking people are more sociable, outgoing, self-confident, exciting and sexually responsive than the average man or woman (Hatfield, and Rapson 11-12).

If the appearance of a man is that crucial for thinking about dating or starting a relationship, Jimbo ‘The Face’ Byrne is definitely not Clara’s Mr Right. She describes him as “a fishmonger stinking of stout and mackerel with the biggest face in the west. [...] Jimbo’s head like an old horse all stooped and drunk. His fish fingers like hooks on [her] good blouse” (NEB 14). Roller Royle, in comparison, is described far more positively and attractively. “His stance ... All-American. His suit a shade of blue right out of summer. His quiff, with no respect to gravity, whipped up on his head and reaching skywards. The Roller Royle” (NEB 18). For this reason, the band singer is assumed to be the ideal partner.

Helen Fischer states that feeling attracted to a mating partner may lead to “heightened energy, obsessive following, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, possessive mate guarding, affiliative courtship gestures [...] and intense motivation to win this *particular* individual” (“Fisher, 2004” cited in Fisher 94).

The longing for establishing a (sexual) relationship starts with puberty. During this stage of development the child physically changes into an adult, causing the teenagers to explore their bodies. When reaching the age of puberty, many boys as well as girls masturbate. This habit was long rejected by theologians as being sinful and causing illnesses. While masturbating can be a group event for boys, it is a more private event

for girls. Their fantasies are quite similar and they long to be loved and desired (Hatfield, and Rapson 81-83). Female masturbation is the expression of sexual and erotic interest. It is one of the first sexual experiences of the female body and a way to get to know and accept one's body (Erb, and Klingler 27). Experiencing lust with oneself is not a sign of sexual poverty or rejection but shows a good relationship to the body. Women who masturbate are said to reach the sexual climax more easily and quickly. Most women feel responsible for their own satisfaction and do not want to depend on men (Erb, and Klingler 32).

Seventeen-year-old Breda masturbates, for instance, when getting ready for meeting Roller Royle. She “[perfumes her] bra and knickers in anticipation” (NEB 27) thinking of the ideal partner. Breda narrates that she “[stood] at the mirror that morning and slid [her] hands down [her] pants. Had a chitchat conversation with [herself] as him, and took [her] hands to the rest of [her]” (NEB 27). In her phantasies Breda is with Roller Royle and satisfies her (sexual) longing for him in order to compensate for not being with him.

However, the dream of dating the perfect partner rarely comes true. Relationship problems are very common – not only in puberty. According to Hatfield and Rapson, love and relationships often cause emotional problems such as depression. The symptoms of patients suffering from depression range from sadness, anxiety, hopelessness to loss of interest, loss of appetite, thoughts of suicide as well as persistent physical symptoms (Hatfield, and Rapson 198-200). Many heartbroken lovers suffer from anxiety. They are afraid of having allowed their lives to get out of control. They must realise that they have to cope with too many stressors and pressures in their relationship (Hatfield, and Rapson 209).

Depressive people may lack social skills, which is illustrated in *The New Electric Ballroom*. The sisters Breda and Clara have become incapable of leaving the house and making friendships. They lock themselves inside in order to hide their shame of not having well-functioning relationships. “[Hurrying] towards my inside. Inside where's safe” (NEB 20). “And stay inside always and keep safe away from this wondrous place” (NEB 30). Their lovesickness might be based on jealousy of each other from infancy onwards.

Jealousy is defined as “the aversive emotional response to a partner’s real, imagined, or potential attraction for a third person” (“Bringle, and Buunk, 1986, p.226” cited in Hatfield, and Rapson 279). According to Bringle’s and Buunk’s study, jealous people suffer from a loss of self-esteem, a loss of specialness, a loss of intimacy, a feeling of being excluded and unjustly treated, as well as uncertainty (“Bringle, and Buunk, 1986” cited in Hatfield, and Rapson 280).

The deep aversion can be felt when the sisters change into their seventeen-year-old and eighteen-year-old selves and narrate the story of that man that broke both their hearts at The New Electric Ballroom. At first, Clara’s view is presented:

CLARA. And backstage and pointed to where the Roller waits. Can hear his hit single, ‘Wondrous Place’, reel me in, his lovely voice soothing me and making this nervous scene a little easier. The corridor busy with people packing up and moving on to the next town but all thoughts are of him [...]. Him and the things we will do together. Near his dressing room and my heart slower, my future mapped out with mornings met by his face and his sweet voice singing about this oh-so-wondrous place. The door a little open...

I enter

A pause. Suddenly CLARA gasps for air and her eyes fill with tears.

He’s sat on a table with you [Breda] stood between his legs. (*Pause.*) He has his face tucked into you. (*Pause.*) His big hands around your tiny waist and he’s kissing your mouth. [...]

My throat’s jammed with those butterflies. My blood pumped slower. My heart shot all in an instant. It’s your blue skirt and red blouse, Breda the bad girl. (*Slight pause.*) I can feel the hooked fingers of Jimbo ‘The Face’ Byrne tear at my blouse and rip out my heart and claim it as his. I’m stood still... but I’m already turning through The New Electric, already travelling the ten miles home and with each yard putting an end to any thoughts of love. Each yard travelled and more distance between me and any wish for what is... (*Almost spits.*) This love. The wind is on my back, and the tide is inching in and cobblestones uneasy. The winding streets of our harbour town twisting me to the inside. The narrow streets narrower somehow. The houses on either side leaning in too close to me. Telling me, squeezing me, hurrying me towards my inside. Inside where’s safe. Get inside, Clara. Get inside. Get inside. Get inside... [...] (NEB 19-20)

Breda’s experience of that day is totally different. From her point of view, she is not the “bad girl”, but she herself was terribly hurt by Roller Royle:

BREDA. Outside and the moon lighting up the scene teasing me more. I can see him walking towards a new face standing in the same spot where I stood. That plume of clover just beneath her in the split tarmacadam. Her...? All Doris Day-like, all sweetness. He’s moving in. I can see his big hand on her tiny waist. I can see him mouth the words... ‘It’s your time...’ and little Doris folding into him now. (*Slowly.*) I’m standing, hugging his suit [...]. My insides start retching. My mouth that he kissed all sour now, where he touched all muck. I’m still but already travelling the ten miles home and with each yard putting an end to any thoughts of love. Each yard travelled and more distance between me and any wish for what it is to be in love. And the wind on my back and his song mocking me. And the narrow streets of our town they’re narrower somehow. The houses on either side leaning in that bit close to me. They’re squeezing me, hurrying me towards the inside of this house. To get inside. And stay inside always and keep safe away from this wondrous place. Keep safe. Keep safe inside always. [...] (NEB 29-30)

Interestingly enough, the sisters' experience of that night is both totally different and yet similar. Both are disappointed by a man they have a crush on and decide to hide away from everybody and not to give love a second chance. Roller Royle cheats on both of the girls. He breaks Clara's heart when he kisses Breda, and Breda has to face him kissing another pretty girl shortly after. Completely agitated they cycle back home putting a stop to any further relationships. Thus, they think hiding in a secret place, i.e. at home, would be the best solution for their lovesickness.

Clara still has not recovered from her sister's betrayal. "You [Breda] and the Roller. The big romantic scene..." (NEB 33). The reason for this might be that Breda enjoys hurting her sister's feelings, "And his hand on my back, and his hand down my front, and his mouth against my mouth. While you're stood there with that face collapsing into tears..." (NEB 33). The dispute continues when Clara mentions the Doris Day-like girl. "And you stood outside in the car park with our sodden perfumed knickers, your stony face for once cracking into some emotion as the Roller rolls on to Doris Day..." (NEB 33). Their fight shows that neither of the sisters has managed to cope with their frustration and love problems.

Breda and Clara suffer so much from their past that their youngest sister Ada and Patsy, the fishmonger, might almost be overlooked. Just like her sisters Ada is heartbroken as well. She could have had a relationship with Patsy, but he refuses to be her boyfriend, since he was insulted by Breda, who called him "lonesome", "lumpen", "ugly", "lonely", "foolish" and "fishy" (NEB 36). After the story about his father being Roller Royle and his mother the Doris Day-like woman is revealed (NEB 41), Ada says a little confusedly, "What a difference you are to me suddenly. (*Pause.*) Time to start anew, you and me?" (NEB 42). However, Patsy is deeply hurt and scared, feeling unable to start a love affair.

[...] A man whose only companion is fish and now sewn together with another heart?! Fuck it! My own heart's too scarred by days and nights alone. Too set in its ways by years of chit-chat to little old ladies. Too scared to face into the unknown with just love as a map! I'm stood still but already travelling the lonely road and with each yard travelling it's more distance between me and any wish for what it is to be in love, this reckless love! [...] My heart's ripped out and the ground underneath is loose with the cliffs receding. [...] And now this great space with me running over it towards nothing, towards no home, towards no place, Patsy. My heart ripped out and I can't stop running! I can't stop! (NEB 44)

As a consequence, Ada is lovesick and disappointed. "ADA, *frozen in shock, is looking towards PATSY for some explanation [...]. PATSY can't look at her. [...] Suddenly ADA gasps for air. For the first time her eyes filled with tears. PATSY turns and leaves*

fast for the outside. [...]” (NEB 45). In the end, all of the characters – Breda, Carla, Ada and Patsy – suffer from unrequited love and the problem of coping with their past.

But what does “lovesickness” actually mean? Lovesickness is a deep emotional pain due to the loss of a beloved person. A separation usually leads to reflecting about oneself and to realign oneself. Gerti Senger argues that lovesickness equals mourning for a dead person. It is important to cope with the memories of the loved-ones in order to accept that this part of your life is over (Senger 19-21). Recovering one’s self-esteem and internal balance is quite difficult but essential to start living again. Senger compares the perfect balance to a mother’s relationship with her unborn baby – the state of total harmony and oneness. People are not able to recollect the memories of the unborn state in the womb actively, but the cells can remember. This leads to the longing for fusion with a partner. The separation from a beloved partner is similar to the birth of a child. The feeling of security is replaced by anxiety and insecurity. As a consequence, lovesick individuals as well as babies experience the parting with helplessness (Senger 26-27).

Similar to Senger’s argument, Breda claims that “the womb is a more desirable place for a baby” (NEB 6-7). Moreover, she reminds “ourselves that the womb is a more desirable place than this ‘created world’. We don’t want to be alone but we’re alone” (NEB 8). Also Clara argues that “the womb is a more desirable place for a baby” (NEB 31-32). They regret that “people are born talkers” (NEB 6; 31) because they can talk about anything no matter how unnecessary it might seem. The womb is a kind of hiding place for them, where they can escape from the talking and gossiping people around them as well as hide from the difficulty of coping with a broken heart. The sisters wish to enjoy the balance between the mother and her unborn again in order to avoid thinking about their love problems. Their house can be seen as a womb-like place for the sisters hiding from the world outside.

According to Senger, women are better than men at communicating and articulating their emotional problems. Expressing themselves through language helps them to cope with their hurt feelings as in situations of lovesickness (Senger 136-137).

The sisters are afraid of people’s gossip and claim that “[people] are born talkers” (NEB 5; 31). “People talking just for the act of it. Words spinning to nothing. For no definable reason” (NEB 6). In order to escape the gossip and the shame, the women hide in their

house. However, it's not only the others who have problems with communication. Clara's thoughts, for instance, sometimes wander off and she talks nonsense, "Fish fish fish! Fish yes fish. No yes fish!" (NEB 7; 46) and "Yes no no! No yes fish! Fish fish fish..." (NEB 12). Unlike Senger's argument, the women are totally unable to talk about their love problems and so they use storytelling as a therapy (see Chapter 3.5.2). As the play deals with language and its problems, it is interesting that the game of "Scrabble" (NEB 40) is mentioned – a word game that Patsy would like to play. Due to the sisters' inability of expressing themselves that game might be a real challenge for them.

It can be seen that the three sisters have severe problems to endure their longing for being loved. Their fear of the people's rumours hinders them from leaving their house and creates a womb-like or claustrophobic feeling. They have been unable to overcome their bitter disappointment about Roller Royle and tragically re-enact their memories of that traumatic evening in the discotheque.

3.3.3 Religion – A Coping Strategy

There are quite a number of religious innuendos in *The New Electric Ballroom*. They seem to be meant ironically. However, a degree of religious belief could have been intended by Enda Walsh. Believing in God helps a great number of people to cope with challenging circumstances and to reorganise their way of living. Moreover, he creates a feeling of comfort, strengthens and supports them.

Breda, for example, explains that the womb is a better place for a baby than the world with all its talking and gossip. She thinks that God could have chosen a more glamorous entrance for a baby.

For all his miracles and great creations, you'd imagine our Lord could have created a more dignified point of arrival. This is the man who did wonders with the mouth and ears and surpassed Himself with the eyes but sharing a channel with the 'waterworks department' doesn't strike me as the healthiest environment for a yet-to-be-born baby [...] (NEB 6).

Breda is certain that God is the creator of life and that he loves his creation, but she accuses him of having chosen a horrible way of being born. According to Breda, life would be much easier if she were still in her mother's womb without having to worry about unrequited love. Thus, she stays at home and creates a womb-like atmosphere by never leaving it.

Moreover, Clara recalls that her mother loved her baking. “She said [Clara] had a gift for coffee cake the way Jesus had a gift for sacrifice [...]” (NEB 8). This appears to be ironic seeing as Jesus gave his life to redeem the world. That is ultimate sacrifice rather than a talent. Giving his life for the benefit of mankind is far more challenging than baking cakes. However, Clara’s mother might have just wanted to emphasise her pride in her daughter’s talent and chose a comparison that most honoured Clara.

Once more, Clara talks ironically about saints. The girls from the cannery gossip about her, she turns “to Holy Mary, ‘cause she’s standing there right beside, and the mother of Jesus takes [her] aside and says, ‘You’re the best, Clara. Better than all them who locked you inside [...]. You’re better than all those bitches’” (NEB 9). Would Mary call anybody a “bitch”? In Christianity, Jesus’ mother definitely tries to comfort and strengthen people, and that might be expressed in Clara’s words. Clara could bear the girls’ meanness with Mary’s support.

Furthermore, Patsy brings the latest news of a woman called Mags Donald. Her crippled son is an amazing singer and she is very proud of him (NEB 12).

[We] were all reduced to tears when Mags got up and said what a gift from God this little spastic was. [...] Masses of [people] spread around her feet like Mags herself was giving a sermon at the Mount and though no loaves and fishes were present there was plenty of crisps and scampi... (NEB 12)

Proud mothers are prone to exaggeration. From their point of view the situation might have been comparable to the Sermon on the Mount, but there might also have been some additional embellishment by Patsy. Moreover, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-11; Luke 6:20-49) does not include the allegory of feeding the Five Thousand with bread and fish since it is a separate parable (Mark 6:30-40; Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15). The comparison helps to express the uniqueness of the situation but does not seem to refer to a religious belief in Jesus.

When talking about the cake, Clara comments on the eating habits of the Virgin Mary and the consequences on her beauty. “She never did age, the Virgin Mary. You might put that down to the Middle-Eastern cuisine but Mary Magdalene had a face like a saddle and the truth is, a whore ages worse than someone clean” (NEB 24). Her statement is rather subjective and inadequate. According to the Bible, Magdalene was special to Jesus and the first woman to witness the resurrection (Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:11-18). From Clara’s statement it is still doubtful if she believes in God or just uses biblical phrases and characters randomly or ironically.

Pointing out Mary Magdalene's ugliness as a result of being a whore could be a comparison to her sister Breda because of her betrayal. From Clara's point of view, her sister might be a kind of prostitute who cheated on her. Betrayal does not just happen to the sisters, but is as old as mankind. The biblical comparison should help Clara to find a solution for their fight and to forgive her sister, instead of just accusing Breda. Jesus provides a way to handle problems like that, because he himself thought highly of Mary Magdalene and did not cast her out.

Clara continues mentioning the Mother of Jesus and compares her to a kind of housewife. "What would the Virgin Mary make of all of this [...]? Like many women I'd say she keeps an ordered house, but surely she'd have cause to worry for us three. I can almost feel my brain getting softer and it certainly feels like nearer paradise" (NEB 30-31). Clara could also mean that Mary is keeping watch over her family, otherwise she would not be able to look after them. It seems as if Clara feels comfortable with Holy Mary caring for her and her sisters.

Interestingly enough, Clara is the only one praying in the play when she "*mumbles a 'Hail Mary' to herself*" (NEB 34). Due to this action it might be concluded that she definitely believes in God and especially in the Mother of Jesus. Praying and believing in God is a coping strategy for her.

At the end of the play, the sisters wash Patsy and Breda says, "Scrub away then and reborn, Clara!" (NEB 36). This might be interpreted as a kind of resurrection. The "old" Patsy has to die metaphorically, so that he has the chance to be partly accepted by the sisters. The truth about his parents would probably never have come to the surface if he had not joined in the sisters' performance. For a better result – such as the death of Jesus for the redemption of mankind – Patsy has to put up with the bath and getting clean again.

On the whole, *The New Electric Ballroom* is filled with religious references and leads to the conclusion that the sisters, especially Clara, might be believers and Christians in one way or the other. Religion, or at least ironically mentioning religious aspects every now and then, appears to help them endure their lonely lives and to explain the traumatic loss of a loved one. The religious aspects do not seem to be used randomly. God is the creator of mankind, which adds purpose to their lives. They have the consolation that they are at least wanted and loved by God and Virgin Mary keeps an eye on them.

3.4 Bedbound – An Example of Coping with Traumatic Events

Bedbound, as Walsh's first self-directed play (Munster Literature Centre 1), is a "fast and furious ride through terrifying terrains" (Haughey 128). Denise Foley describes the acting in *Bedbound* as "running a marathon every night", because the actors "are ranting, keening, or reacting silently to each other's torrent of words with an intensity that seems ultimately unsustainable" (Foley 1). The way of performing and moving away from traditions allow the audience to look into the character's psyche from the outset by moving between realism and surrealism (Haughey 128). In Matt Wolf's experience, the play is more exhausting than invigorating, but its end evokes sympathy for the characters' quest (Wolf 43). According to Harvey O'Brien, the play is a "stylized, highly artificial piece of theatre" and "an extremely intense theatrical experience" (O'Brien 2). Enda Walsh favours monologues since they express a range of sub-textual themes and enable the audience to "explore the characters' inner worlds in more detail than 'natural' conversation would allow" (O'Brien 2).

From Maddy Costa's point of view, there is a strong connection between Walsh and his grotesque characters, because they are reflections of the author himself. In *Bedbound*, for instance, he tried to find a real love for his father. The daughter's babbling illustrates his own language, his rapid way of speaking as well as his expletives and self-deprecating quips (Costa 3). In *The Guardian* he admits that "[he] always had problems with the sound of [his] own voice. [He] felt so inarticulate" (Gardner 2001: 2). Walsh finds himself in the character of the daughter, even though he is not as shattered as the girl (Gardner 2001: 3).

The play is about a father and his daughter who suffers from polio. Since he was a young man, he has had an ambition to become a successful furniture salesman in Cork and, later, in Dublin. To satisfy this ambition, he is willing to do anything, including acts of perversion and violence (Foley 1). While, the father appears to be a "psychopath with a sense of humor", his daughter "ranges from helpless cripple to crotchety boss to obsequious underling to angry daughter so seamlessly that it's as if she has multiple personalities constantly jockeying for center stage" (Foley 1).

Father and daughter are "claustrophobically immured in a tiny bedroom on [a] single bed" (P. Taylor 1) and are so "twisted in mind and body they can't get out of bed" (Stasio 43). The central function of the bed is to represent, on the one hand, a coffin for

the crippled daughter and her father, and on the other hand, a womblike shelter for the father to escape shame and guilt (Stasio 43). At a second glance, it can be noticed that father and daughter actually care for each other and understand each other's fears. The final kiss symbolises redemption (Gardner 2001: 3)

3.4.1 Plot Summary

Walsh's play *Bedbound*, which is dedicated to his father Sean Walsh, who was a furniture salesman just like the male main character, is set in Cork in a tiny room which only comprises a small, shabby child's bed and one window which has been painted black making it impossible to look outside. Each of the two characters – the crippled daughter (she does not have a proper name, but is called "Princess" by her mother) and her fifty-year-old father Maxwell Darcy (Maxie for short) – sits on one end of the bed. The daughter looks dishevelled, lifeless and it seems as if she has been in bed much longer than her pale and ill-looking father. Gradually, the audience learns about the daughter's and father's life stories when their memories come to the surface and they act out what has finally led to their present situation.

At the age of fifteen Maxie has great plans for the future. He works in a furniture shop and has always adored the salesmen. Therefore, he washes his one suit every day and wears it regularly to work in order to have a professional appearance. He dreams of becoming a salesman himself or even the boss of the furniture shop and to make the best of himself.

When Maxie hears of a salesman called Marcus Enright, who has a furniture shop with his two sons, he wishes enviously that he too could have a son with whom he could open a furniture shop. When his wife, however, gives birth to a girl, the father is very disappointed. Nevertheless, he tries to make the best of the situation and is intent on awakening the daughter's interest in furniture by showing her, for instance, pop-up books about chairs and tables. Her first word even is "stool". The father dreams of calling the future shop "Maxwell Darcy and Daughter".

However, luck is not on his side and everything takes a different direction. One day, mother and daughter go to the beach to spend a nice afternoon there, when suddenly the daughter falls into a hole. On this day, she is diagnosed with polio and everything starts to get out of hand. The mother passionately cares for her child, while the father does not know how to cope with this new situation. Mum stays in bed with the girl and

repeatedly reads a book to her about a prince who would come and kiss her some day and free her from this sad life. Dad, however, starts to build more and more walls in the house leaving less space for his wife and daughter until only a tiny room with a bed is left for them. The mother tries to suppress this claustrophobic atmosphere by talking constantly to fill the silence.

As Maxwell Darcy has always longed to become a rich salesman, he makes his dream come true one day. When his boss Mr. Bee wants to have a conversation, Maxie fills a glass with paraffin and – “totally unintended” – spills it all over Mr. Bee’s jacket sleeves, claiming that it was only water. When the boss lights a match in order to smoke a cigar, he suddenly bursts into flames. As a consequence, Maxie becomes his successor and the new boss of the furniture shop.

His fame and fortune is growing, so that he can open three furniture shops in Dublin in just one day. As he has always envied Marcus Enright, he wants to show off. However, when he realises that his employee Brian has not opened the third shop on time, he gets so angry that he smashes Brian’s head into a cupboard several times and only stops because of the photographers watching who actually want to write about the opening of the new shops. Maxie thinks the mistake has been done on purpose to make everyone laugh at him, bringing shame on him and on his achievements.

After having lost his temper he returns to Cork to see his wife and daughter. He has always blamed his wife for not having given him a healthy male heir. He repudiates his daughter and even thinks about killing her, which he, however, reconsiders. In a rage, the father murders his colleague Dan Dan with a Stanley blade when they are carrying a wall unit which is damaged accidentally. Returning home he notices his dead wife on the bed. The daughter has to watch her dying, leaving her traumatised.

At the end of the play both of the characters finally know the other’s view of the past events and start to understand each other’s fears and panic attacks. In the end, the father reads the book to his daughter as her mother had always done: “And when they kissed, everything that had gone before had been forgotten and everything in front of them was ... was joy” (Walsh, *Bedbound* 33)³. Finally, the daughter leans to her dad and they kiss. They are able to listen to the silence without constantly talking and their panic is gone.

³ All the following quotations abbreviated B (*Bedbound*) are taken from WALSH, Enda. *Bedbound*. 2001. London: Nick Hern Books, 2006.

3.4.2 Poliomyelitis (Polio) as a Traumatic Event

The female main character of *Bedbound* suffers from polio. The whole play is based on the fact that the daughter is not able to move. She and also her father are unable to cope with the trauma. In order to understand the reason for the disease and for her fate of being bedbound, the symptoms and preventative measures shall be considered in the following.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the technical term for this illness is poliomyelitis and children under five years of age are particularly affected. This highly infectious illness is caused by a virus which damages the nervous system. Total paralysis can occur within a few hours, which mainly affects the legs (WHO 1). The virus is transmitted through contact with human faeces, infected food and water, or person-to-person contact (NHS 1). It enters through the mouth, multiplies in the intestine and leads to fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness in the neck and pain in the limbs. A small number of infected individuals (five to ten percent) die due to immobilised breathing muscles. Once infected with the virus, one cannot be cured from polio (WHO 1). For this reason, a polio vaccination is essential to stay healthy. In the UK (NHS 1) as well as in Ireland (Irishhealth.com), children under ten years of age are vaccinated against the disease under consideration as part of the childhood vaccination programme and need booster doses later on. The vaccine is normally a combination of polio, diphtheria and tetanus (NHS 1). Due to the vaccine, infections have dramatically decreased since 1988. Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan have remained the only countries with a high number of polio cases (WHO 1).

In *Bedbound* the daughter narrates how she became infected with the virus. Once she spent a day at the beach with her mother. “That would be the last time [the mother] would see her as a healthy girl” (B 26). The daughter went for a walk

[and] then [she] felt no ground underneath [her]. Like the dog in the Roadrunner cartoons [she] tried running in the air. It was sort of funny until [she] fell down. And [she] fell down into this big hole. And right up to [her] waist [she] was covered in shit. [She] soon stopped trying to catch any clean air and just breathed in the shit air. [She] had a little puke. [...] [She] spat the shit out and started to climb up a little ladder out of the concrete hole. And [she] didn't even cry. And that's the story of the day [she] got the polio. From then on everything went mad [...] (B 26).

According to her account, she fell into a hole of “shit” – most probably dirt and faeces – so that her hands and face were covered in dirt as well. Since contact with faeces is one possible way of transmitting the virus, her story is very plausible. However, in such a

disgusting situation vomiting is not surprising and therefore does not directly have to be a first symptom of polio. From the beginning of the play, the audience sees that the disease has caused severe damage to her body, because “[her] back is twisted and [...] she is obviously crippled” (B 9). The girl was not vaccinated against polio despite it is part of the childhood vaccination programme in the UK (NHS 1) and also in Ireland (Irishhealth.com), which leads to the assumption that the narrative dates from before 1988, because from that year on there has been a global effort to eradicate this disease (WHO 1).

The father is overwhelmed by the disease (“And I see yer fucked up body! I see how the polio has sent things wrong in *my* life! And I look at the wife who did this!” (B 30)) and banishes his child by claiming that “[she] died when [he] was up in Dublin [...]” (B 30). The mother is the only one who self-sacrificingly cares for the daughter. She is the one who stays at her bedside and reads out fairy tales with happy endings to her little child in order to comfort and strengthen her willingness to live on. The daughter feels safe and secure with her mother around when she says, “I see the calm face of my Mam/she reads the book and the words not fire but pass with a music from her voice/my voice so ugly/but must keep talking to fill this fucking silence!” (B 21). However, she also has complexes concerning the sound of her own voice and cannot bear silence. As a consequence, the mother keeps reading and talking to her.

The girl’s sudden illness is a total shock to the family members. It appears that the father is mainly affected by the terrible news, because his dream of opening a furniture shop together with his daughter remains unfulfilled. The daughter faces the challenging task to cope with being bedbound and her father tries to cope with the shame of having a crippled daughter.

3.4.3 Social Phobia as a Traumatic Event

Maxie, the male main character in *Bedbound*, cares about what people say about him, because gossip could have a negative influence on his reputation. He tries to appear as a successful salesman without any imperfections. Maxie is quite obsessed with reflecting about other people’s reactions and opinions, the fear of failed performance and embarrassment, which might be caused by social phobia.

Depression and social anxiety often co-occur and show similar symptoms ranging from shyness to the psychiatric condition of social phobia having a negative impact on

people's ability to function effectively (Ingram 358). Depression is the result of coping with the past, while anxiety is future-oriented (Ingram 368).

According to Adrian Wells and David Clark, social phobia is the “fear of one or more situations in which one may be seen to behave in a way that is humiliating or embarrassing” (Wells, and Clark 3). Such situations of discomfort may trigger visible anxiety symptoms or inadequate performance. As a consequence, these situations are either avoided or endured (Wells, and Clark 3). The onset of this disorder is in the mid-teens to the early twenties (Ingram 360). Similarly, Franklin Mesa et al. state that social anxiety disorder

[...] is characterised by unreasonable worry that the person will do or say something that will be seen by others as embarrassing or humiliating. This worry may take the form of specific negative thoughts, a general unease in social settings, or even specific beliefs that one will not behave “appropriately” in social interactions (Mesa et al. 13).

This anxiety disorder includes two subtypes: specific social phobia (i.e. fear of circumscribed situations such as making a formal speech in public or eating in public) and generalised social phobia (i.e. fear of most types of social contact with other people). Social phobics mainly suffer from the fear that personal beliefs may interfere with their social performance without being able to break that vicious cycle of anxiety. Their hypersensitivity to signals from other people causes a feeling of extreme discomfort and a fear of failure (Wells, and Clark 3-5). “The fear of failed or diminished performance is responsible for maintaining anxiety that is associated with exposure to the phobic situation [...] and may actually lead to problems with performance, and the individual is motivated to avoid such problems” (Wells, and Clark 5). As a consequence, social phobia patients are very self-focused and self-monitored in order to avoid misbehaviour in public situations. They tend to interpret ambiguous feedback negatively and catastrophically, and mainly evaluate their own performance in social situations negatively (Wells, and Clark 5-6).

As has been mentioned above, the onset of social phobia is in the mid-teens to the early twenties, which coincides with Maxwell Darcy's age – he is fifteen years old when he first has the desire to become a successful furniture salesman. At that age he works ambitiously in the storeroom of a furniture shop, but always comes to work in his only suit, which he washes every day (B 10). He always tries to look smart and feels superior to his colleagues. He even keeps a notebook called “Salesman” in which he writes down everything that might be important for a furniture salesman (B 11). At the age of 23

years Maxie sounds confident of his success by claiming, “Twenty three and Robson’s Furniture Emporium dances to my beat” (B 18) and “Robson’s is my success! Mine alone! Twenty three and Cork is mine! I’m loved by them!” (B 19). Maxie is so obsessed with becoming wealthy that he does almost everything to succeed. To make a good deal he even has a sexual encounter with a Norwegian salesman (B 22-23). He also boasts about his opening of three shops in one single day, “What man has opened three furniture shops on the same day throughout Dublin!? What man?” (B 27). Maxie even compares his genius to Jesus Christ, who was a carpenter (B 27). He admires his shops to the extent that personifications can be found throughout the play (“She’s a beauty all right! She’s a cracker! [...] Jesus, but what a beautiful sight she is, lads, there with her Pearly Gates open!” (B 28-29)). His breakthrough has almost come, when a problem is encountered. His employee forgets to open the shop on time, which makes Maxie lose control. “[He runs] through the shop smashing his head from wardrobe to table from cabinet to wall unit [...]” (B 30), because he feels he has been cheated. After all the shame and disappointment he leaves Dublin and returns to Cork (B 30). Within ten years the people of Cork City should have genuflected in front of him, but everything went awry (B 31). The “American Dream” – from rags to riches – has not come true.

Maxie’s ambition shows that he has always wanted to impress others, because he cares about gossip. For this reason, he has tried to be better than all the other furniture salesmen in order to overcome his fear of failure. However, his efforts are not rewarded. His worst fear comes true – he is deeply ashamed when his employee forgets to open the third shop, which leads to his low self-esteem. If he had not put so much importance on other people’s opinions, he would not have been afraid to act inadequately. But the more he tries to be perfect, the more he fails. As a consequence, he becomes overwhelmed by anxiety and isolates himself from the world. Unable to cope with his fear of failure, he leaves Dublin in order to escape and avoid all those situations which could be embarrassing (“I leave it all behind and leave! And leave Dublin!” (B 30)).

Maxwell Darcy cannot bear the shame of having a crippled daughter, because in his mind this makes him imperfect. That is why he leaves his wife and child back in Cork and pretends to live a successful life in Dublin. He has always avoided admitting that he actually has a family, because of the fear of failure, embarrassment and not being taken seriously. He has never wanted to show any signs of weakness and has pretended to be a

perfect salesman. However, when he returns, disappointed, to Cork, he sees “Mam lying all hollow and dead like a doll” (B 32). At this point in his life he starts to be “afraid of [his] life outside” (B 33). He might have loved his wife without ever showing any affection for her. Losing her leads to his total emotional breakdown. Since her death Maxie has hidden in the house together with his daughter without leaving the safety of the bed.

It can be assumed that the father in *Bedbound* has suffered from social phobia since he was a teenager. All his life, he has tried to please everybody and has cared about other people’s opinions. He has always wanted to impress others, but at the same time fears failure. An employee’s mistake and the death of his wife are the final straw, resulting in a total loss of self-confidence and withdrawal from society.

3.4.4 Withdrawal from Society – A Coping Strategy

In *Bedbound*, father and daughter are totally isolated from the world outside, which creates a claustrophobic atmosphere. The characters do not leave the bed during the play. This withdrawal from society seems to comfort Maxie and help him cope with his traumatic memories of social phobia, ambition and murder.

Maxwell Darcy has always wanted to become an affluent salesman and work together with a son. Since his expectations are destroyed by his wife giving birth to a girl (B 24), he places all his hopes on the girl in order to run a shop with her one day – “Maxwell Darcy and Daughter” (B 25). The worst stroke of fate, however, was the polio. “I see how the polio has sent things wrong in *my* life!” he screams (B 30). Not being able to cope with his disappointment and shame, the father started “building walls inside the house” (B 30) around his daughter’s bed causing claustrophobic feelings. “And I make the space tight tight around you and your Mum! WHAT SHAME YOU GAVE ME! And I spend the nights building the walls so it’s tight tight tight and getting tighter!” the father explains (B30). Full of fear and with a feeling of imprisonment the girl asks her mother, “the walls are getting closer?/what makes the walls getting closer?” (B 13).

It could be assumed that this situation of entrapment causes claustrophobia. Rachman defines claustrophobia as “the fear of enclosed spaces (*claustr*o means closed)” (Rachman 163). Small or locked rooms, tunnels, cellars, elevators or crowded areas may elicit this fear. People suffering from claustrophobia are afraid of constriction as well as

suffocation. Rachmann concludes that an aversive experience in an enclosed space may trigger this anxiety (Rachman 164; 166; 170).

According to Rachmann's definition, the daughter in *Bedbound* could suffer from claustrophobia, because she has been entrapped for a long time and her father has always minimized her living space by building walls (B 30). Despite the congruent symptoms, evidence suggests that the girl's claustrophobia partly overlaps with another kind of anxiety disorder called "agoraphobia". According to Paul Salkovskis and Ann Hackmann, it is defined as the fear of not being able to get out of a crowded place because of the lack of an exit. The majority of the patients are afraid of collapsing or being left helpless in public. One important feature of this phobia is the fear of unexpected panic attacks or panic-like symptoms (Salkovskis, and Hackmann 27). Dianne Chambless argues that agoraphobics fear public places as well as being away from home and familiarity (Chambless 2). Agoraphobics

[...] fear the recurrence of panic attacks – bursts of terror during which one may experience shortness of breath, heart palpitations, depersonalization or derealization, weakness in the limbs, dizziness, the threat of bladder or bowel incontinence, or nausea. These attacks are typically accompanied by a sense of doom and fear that one will die, become insane, faint or lose control in such a way as to be publicly humiliated. Agoraphobic people seek to flee when such attacks occur, and fear and avoid any place where flight to safety is likely to be hindered (Chambless 2).

The daughter appears to suffer from a combination of claustrophobia and agoraphobia since claustrophobia on its own does not include panic attacks. However, she is not affected by the symptom of being afraid of leaving the house which is part of agoraphobia – probably because she actually is not able to move anyway. The father, on the other hand, has a problem with leaving the house even though he is able walk when he states that he is "afraid of [his] life outside" (B 33). This might be evidence of suffering from agoraphobia.

In *Bedbound* several situations of panic are evident. For instance, the girl states that "[the] panic has sucked [her] dry again 'til all that's left is ta start over. [She gets] that tiredness turn to tight ... and [she gives] in ta the words. [She lets] go" (B 9). Sometimes both, daughter and father, suffer from panic attacks in the play, like in the stage directions "DAD panics and falls to the bed. The DAUGHTER begins to panic" (B 12) as well as "DAD begins to panic a bit and covers himself with a blanket. The DAUGHTER is immediately nervous. [...] The silence closes in on the DAUGHTER and she begins to panic [...]" (B 20). The end of the play seems to bring a positive twist when the girl says, "I'm in the bed. The panic is gone [...]" (B 34). However, there is

no evidence that the characters suffer from the fear of actually suffering a panic attack or worrying about the consequences of the attack – two features of panic disorder with agoraphobia (Salkovskis, and Hackmann 28). For this reason, the situation of the two characters could be defined as “borderline cases”.

3.4.5 Ambition – A Coping Strategy

On the one hand, ambition is presented as a technique to cope with the disappointment of having a crippled daughter, and on the other hand, it is a traumatic experience which leads to even more dramatic incidents, such as murder.

Ambition is a prominent theme in *Bedbound*. This strong emotion of becoming rich and famous dramatically leads to murder and death. Maxie is so eager to become a salesman that he recklessly and egoistically kills his boss Mr. Bee. “It seems only him [Mr. Bee] stands between me and my destiny” (B16). The actual murder is described in a rather funny way:

[...] I run the tap for a glass of water but fill it with paraffin. I turn all clumsy and whoops-a-daisy, I spill the paraffin all over Mr. Bee's jacket sleeves and lucky cigar which peeps out from his breast pocket like a shy little doggy. ‘Just water!’ I say to Mr. Bee's odourly challenged no no no no no no nose. [...] I watch as he places the cigar in his mouth and roots for his matches. [...] I turn and hear the click of the match off the box. [...] I walk from the small canteen for the storeroom as Mr. Bee explodes into ‘fla fla flames’ and lights my future upwards. [...] And I mean, who would have believed it? I'm a salesman (B 17).

The pun “and lights my future upwards” (B 17) presents quite dark humour, because one man's trash is another man's treasure and literally speaking the boss bursts into flames. Maxie selfishly gets what he has always wanted: he becomes a furniture salesman and the boss of his former colleagues.

To maximise his reputation as a salesman, Maxie does not even shrink from having sexual contact with a Norwegian business man. In order to make a good deal with Lars, he does not mind Lars' sexual preferences of licking his arse and vice versa (B 22-23). “The deal is mine [...]” (B 23), he delightedly informs his colleague Dan Dan.

Maxwell Darcy soon realises that being just a salesman is not good enough. He is advised to have a son (B 24) in order to run the furniture shop together and pass it on once he retires. At first he is quite appalled of the idea of having a relationship, “A wife? And what the fuck would I be needing with a wife?” (B 23). However, he has to marry in order to have an heir. For this reason he spontaneously marries a woman that he first met in a bingo hall (B 23). The only reason for having sexual intercourse is to

have a son. “It’s my first ever fuck. [...] Nine months later and it’s all push push pushing! ‘Til out it drops! Not a son at all but a girl!” (B 24). Maxie’s fortune should have lasted forever; however, having a daughter is a disappointment. Making the most of the situation he tries to raise the little girl’s interest in furniture. She has lots of pop-up books about chairs and tables and her first word is *stool* (B 24-25). His dream of “Maxwell Darcy and Daughter” (B 25) does not come true due to the polio. This setback, however, cannot stop Maxie’s longing for success.

In order to compensate for not having a son, he has always tried to outperform his business rivals, especially Mr. Marcus Enright. Maxie hates the man (B 24), who is described with “[a] face all tanned and handsome. A suit of light grey and loose. A laugh of a rich man” (B 24). Mr. Enright intends to open a furniture shop in Dublin together with his two sons. Crestfallen because he has only a daughter, who in addition is very ill, he has to find a way to improve his status as a business man. For this reason, he plans to open three furniture shops in just one day (B 27). He compares himself to an Irish revolutionary leader by saying, “Three shops in one day! A fucking record man! [...] [The] Michael Collins of the furniture world!” (B 28). Unfortunately, his plan does not work out due to an employee’s mistake (B 30). If there had not been so many cameras, he might actually have killed Brian. Totally broken he decides to leave Dublin. “[His] last image a giant furniture shop with Marcus Enright and Sons gilded in gold!” (B 30). Despite all his efforts, he does not manage to beat his rival Mr. Enright.

Back in Cork, the customer Mrs. Dexter needs a new wall unit and hires Maxwell Darcy and his colleague Dan Dan. “No fucking mistakes now!” (B 31). Dan Dan is extremely nervous about failing and disappointing Maxie. “Look at the concentration swell Dan Dan’s brain. Little dribbles of sweat spit up on his fringe and edge their way down his face. [...] ‘Easy Dan Dan! Watch out boy!’ The strain showing on Dan Dan’s body the wall unit begins a nervous shake” (B 31). Maxie feels he is being observed by “all [his] customers peeping out through the curtains at the new wall unit [...]” (B 31). All of a sudden Dan Dan stumbles and the wall unit gets badly damaged, which makes Maxie livid even though his colleague is very sorry. “[His] thumb flicks the Stanley blade ‘til all that’s left is to slit Dan Dan’s throat! And [he does]” (B 32). His ambition for success and a good reputation leads to killing his long friend and colleague Dan Dan. That incidence, however, shatters Maxie and makes him return to his family.

Maxwell's longing to be a successful furniture salesman has made him a selfish double murderer in the end. He even accepts having sex with a man just to improve his own chances as a business man. His ambition makes him sad and lonely, having to cope with shame and guilt, without being able to live a proper life any more.

3.5 Storytelling – A Coping Strategy

In order to cope with trauma, patients are advised to talk about their traumatic situations. Therefore, this chapter concentrates on storytelling as therapy.

In John McLeod's view, storytelling is a successful therapeutic method, because it is a basic human way of communicating meaning and emotions. Through stories reality is constructed in people's minds, combining real and imagined events. The significance of stories, however, tends to be widely neglected in our modern world. With the help of storytelling, psychological problems can be solved by thinking about the reason why something happened, especially in cases of danger and trauma. By re-telling stories, problems can be gradually understood and then solved once and for all (McLeod 28-38).

Narrations even imply a social function, by which the teller can be identified. In other words, identity is constructed by means of storytelling. It is both the patient's and the therapist's job to excavate the narrated social events and the self. Stories normally include information about action, purpose, identity, feeling, intentionality and the social world in which the storyteller lives. Storytelling happens rather spontaneously and information about oneself and problem-solving is provided unconsciously. If patients undergo narrative therapy, they are able to tell their own life-stories without interruption or judgement (McLeod 38-55).

3.5.1 Storytelling in *The Walworth Farce*

In *The Walworth Farce* storytelling helps Dinny cope with his past. He explains to Sean that he asked a lot of questions about the bloody incident back in Ireland when he was little. In order to make his son feel comfortable, Dinny tells him how he once rescued his brother Paddy. "The telling of the story ... it helps [him]. [...] [He] start[s] to tell a new story" (WF 69). Sean, however, finds out that "none of these words are true" (WF 69). Actually, re-telling or rather re-enacting the lie helps Dinny to live with his guilt. He once rescued his brother, whom he later mercilessly killed just because of money.

His memories of the deed haunt him continuously, but he tries to prevent his sons from knowing the truth. Blake still believes his father's story, because he has not seen the dead bodies. Dinny is unable to stop the farce even in his own dying moments. He continues performing and longing for the acting trophy, the prize for the best actor of the farce, until he is completely dead (WF 83).

Blake suffers from isolation as well. He has difficulties in remembering Ireland. Years before he had had clear memories of the day of their departure from Cork to London and he was happy. He has always believed in the farce. "But all these pictures have stopped. [He] say[s] [Dinny's] words and all [he] can see is the word. [...] There's no sense to [his] day 'cause the sense isn't important anymore. No pictures. No dreams. Words only. [...] All [he's] got is the memory of the roast chicken" (WF 22). Blake is depressed, because he almost lost all his memories of home. There is no desire to return or to dream about Cork like his father does. This could be the reason why he tries to help his little brother to break out of their stagnation and to start a better life outside the flat.

Moreover, Blake may have never wanted to leave the flat, because his father frightened him. Dinny has always told his sons that people try to trick them and that "them bodies from outside be banging down our door and dragging [Blake] down below" (WF 32). Since he has never met anybody from the real world like Sean, he is of the opinion that people are bad. However, he cannot be blamed for his father's negative influence.

Since Sean discovers that his father is both a liar and a murderer and learns about his daily encounters with Hayley, he decides to leave the flat, but only together with his brother. So, he's "thinking of whether [he] could ever risk [his] life with somebody else" (WF 61). Blake, however, is more difficult to convince, because he fears he will be alone. Sean's idea is to "kill Dad, break the story, step outside like [Sean's] got it all planned ... but then [Sean] walk[s] away from [Blake] with [Haley]" (WF 57). Then, however, "*BLAKE fires the knife into DINNY's back*" (WF 83) in order to allow Sean to live a normal life outside the flat. Unfortunately, Sean stabs Blake without knowing that he has already killed their father (WF 83). Having witnessed this tragedy Hayley flees. Actually, Sean should have been glad to have the chance to start a new life without re-enacting the farce any more. However, he has to cope with murdering his brother. He cannot escape the pattern and does not know how to live without Blake or Hayley in the world outside. So, he continues performing.

3.5.2 Storytelling in *The New Electric Ballroom*

In *The New Electric Ballroom* Enda Walsh uses storytelling again as a way of coping with the past. The three sisters as well as Patsy, the fishmonger, live a life of patterns in order to feel safe and to hide themselves from their disappointing past. The women are unable to articulate their problems and so they constantly re-enact the night at The New Electric Ballroom when the band singer Roller Royle cheated on them in a play-within-a-play. Patsy, on the other hand, tries to repress his loneliness by living according to a certain schedule.

Ada, the youngest sister, claims that “[she was] only a baby when [she] first [heard] that story from [...] Breda. Then thousand times [she’s] made [Breda] tell it again and again like some child... though [Ada is] not a child. (*Pause.*) Still, it hurts [Breda] the same [...]” (NEB 30). When Breda asks Ada if she does not feel safer inside than out (NEB 30), Ada admits that “[she doesn’t] feel anything” (NEB 30). Once the acting is finished, it starts again. Breda allows Ada a short rest but “then [they]’ll start over” (NEB 31). An old tape recorder marks the beginning of the narration (NEB 13). “*ADA presses the play button and what begins is a foley soundtrack roughly pasted together by ADA to accompany the story [they]’re about to hear*” (NEB 14). Then the two elder sisters change into their teenage selves. The patterns comfort the women and give purpose to their lives. They are afraid of the life outside and stay at home, safe and sound. Storytelling and re-enacting their dramatic experience helps them to cope with their lives and to bear the burden of a broken heart. Ada is the only one of the family who leaves the house for work. She does not seem to enjoy her life and tries to “[leave] the safety of [her] home and [their] little town and step into the real world with love as [her] only guide” (NEB 28). She is the sisters’ only link to the life outside, except for Patsy.

Patsy comes “with the tide” (NEB 23) supplying the women with fish and always bringing the latest news from the village, such as “Terrific news about Nana Cotter [...]. A hundred years, God bless her, and a lovely letter from the President of congratulations” (NEB 11). “The only thing that is certain in [his] life is that [he] always [comes] to [the sisters’] house” (NEB 23). He is neither handsome nor attractive. “People have said [he has] the looks of a man who’s been struck in the face by a wet fish” (NEB 11). In contrast to the sisters, Patsy gets nervous when he is alone in the house. That is why he quickly leaves the house for work every day (NEB 12). Patsy has

never asked the sisters why they have stayed inside for years (NEB 23). He just wonders “now if [the] ladies would open up to [him] a little and treat [him] as a visitor some day” (NEB 24). He even dreams of a relationship with Ada (NEB 42-43) and of leaving “behind the safety of all [they]’ve known before. So turn to the door and open a life of possibilities...” (NEB 43). Unfortunately, his dream does not come true.

All of the four characters need storytelling as a coping strategy. When they finally get a bit closer to each other due to Patsy’s revelation of his parents (NEB 41), they still do not manage to become friends since Breda has insulted Patsy (NEB 36). The women need the safety and loneliness of their house to escape the gossip, while Patsy needs company to endure his lonely life.

3.5.3 Storytelling in *Bedbound*

In *Bedbound* storytelling serves as a coping strategy for the two main characters. Father and daughter are bedridden and desperately try to understand each other’s fears and past actions.

While Maxie, the father, prefers wallowing in self-pity, the daughter cannot bear silence and speaks continuously. “You should talk to me. Why don’t we talk? Ya stopped talking to me!” the daughter complains (B 14). Maxie claims that he wants to sleep, but his daughter knows that he is not able to sleep in silence (B 14). “We’re awake and that’s the way it is in here! [...] It’s filling the gaps [...]” (B 14). In order to endure their desperate situation, they keep talking and role playing, which helps them to get to know the other’s perspective of the story.

Maxwell Darcy regularly falls back into his past career as a furniture salesman. His daughter almost schizophrenically switches between being herself and all kinds of different roles, for instance the colleague Dan Dan, the boss Mr. Bee or the rival Marcus Enright. The father must have told his story several times, otherwise his daughter would not be able to react in this way. Retelling his achievements and failures aids in coping with his eventful past. Father and daughter, however, sometimes do not communicate with each other but madly talk away without caring about the other’s statements. Abruptly, the audience is torn from the father’s story to the daughter’s narrations, which makes the play very vivid.

Storytelling helps both the father as well as his daughter. Retelling the events that led to her illness helps the daughter to cope with her polio and at the same time helps her father to overcome his feelings of guilt and shame due to failure, negligence and murder. Their past haunts them so that they suffer from regular panic attacks and the fear of silence. The daughter was only really loved by her mother, however, she had to watch her mum die when she was only ten years old (B12-13). For that reason, she has to get used to the situation of living with her father who has never cared for her. It is essential to come to terms with oneself in order to be able to live as a family again.

Even though the two family members appear to have knowledge about each other's fate, both of them seem to learn new details of their stories every time. After the girl explains how she got infected with polio, "[...] DAD *is speechless. It is clear that he has been touched by the beauty of her story*" (B 26). Similarly, the father's account of killing Dan Dan and building walls in the house (B 30-32) shocks the daughter to that extent that it can be assumed that the story is totally new to her:

JESUS FUCK!! I get that tight tight tight in the belly holding on to all the hate I have for you! I want to bite and rip your fucking head off for that story you just blurted out like a casual fart! Why? Jesus why the walls, you twisted sad shit of a man! [...] AND THAT WAS YOU??! [...] Can shame sour so much? Was it shame that turned to hate? [...] (B 32).

Father and daughter have not had a good relationship so far, because Maxie left his family due to shame and his ambition to become a successful salesman. Storytelling helps them to develop a kind of father-daughter-relationship gradually. Maxie learns to accept his crippled daughter for whom he has always felt shame. In the end, he even reads the fairy tale to his girl. "*The DAUGHTER hands her DAD the book. He begins to read it. He reads slow. She calms and listens*" (B 33). Finally, they are able to show some affection for each other. "*Slowly the DAUGHTER leans to her DAD. She kisses him softly on the forehead. He then kisses her. They sit back and look at each other. She listens to the silence for a bit*" (B 33). Due to their reconciliation the daughter can bear the silence and feel calm. "[...] The panic is gone [...]" (B 34).

On the whole, Enda Walsh presents the coping technique of storytelling in three of his plays: *The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom* and *Bedbound*. It can be seen that it is an effective coping strategy which helps the characters talk about their trauma and makes them carry on living.

4. JIMMY MURPHY

4.1 *The Writer*

The Irish playwright Jimmy Murphy was born in 1962 and was raised in Inchicore, Dublin. Before he started writing, he was a painter/decorator by trade. Pivotal for his change in profession was winning a place in the National Writers' Workshop with Gary Hynes at NUI Galway in 1990. From 1993 onwards he has been a professional playwright. In 2000, Murphy was welcomed as the new writer in residence at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. Among his plays are *Brothers of the Brush* (1993), *A Picture of Paradise* (1997), *The Muesli Belt* (2000) and *The Kings of the Kilburn High* (2000) (NUI Maynooth 9). In a review by David Lohrey, Murphy is honoured as a “wordsmith” who has an acute ear for dialogue and whose plays are never dull (Lohrey 1). *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* is said to open “with a bang and [close] with a bigger one” (Lohrey 1). Lohrey claims that the “play includes so much humor and human sadness. What it seems to lack is the courage to admit when enough is enough” (Lohrey 3). Arthur Lazere agrees that Jimmy Murphy has a good ear for dialogue. The playwright expresses strong feelings in his play, however, Lazere is of the opinion that the play fails to reach the emotional core of the characters, which makes it tread dangerously close to melodramatic soap (Lazere 2).

4.2 *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road – An Example of Coping with Traumatic Events*

This section deals with Jimmy Murphy's play *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* in order to illustrate how a tragedy can affect people's memories. The first two sub-sections provide a summary of the play and a comparison with Collins' screen adaptation. The following sub-sections concentrate on analysing both versions, focusing on various coping strategies.

4.2.1 Plot Summary

Murphy's two-act play is set in the interior of a social club in London. Five Irish friends, Jap Kavanagh, Maurteen Rodgers, Shay Mulligan, Git Miller and Joe Mullen, are at the wake in remembrance of their departed friend Jackie Flavin.

In 1975, they all emigrated from Ireland to England in the hope of making a fortune. Only Joe, however, manages the leap from rags to riches, which triggers his friends' jealousy. In contrast to the others, Joe has a leading position in the construction sector. Jap, Maurteen, Shay and Git are workers and do low-paid jobs. Maurteen and Shay are the only ones who are married and have children. Shay even has grandchildren.

At the beginning Jap, Maurteen, Shay and Git wait for Joe, who was not at the mass. Among the group of friends, Git is most certain that Joe will eventually turn up. Jap thinks that Joe has totally ignored his friends ever since he became wealthy. Joe finally appears towards the end of Act I and apologises for his late arrival, blaming a busy time at work.

At the wake they drink a large amount of alcohol, especially whiskey. Although Maurteen is seriously trying to give up drinking, because he wants to stop hitting his wife, he is suffering from withdrawal symptoms and cannot resist his bad habit. At first, Git and Shay try to prevent him giving in to the urge to drink. However, Jap persuades Maurteen and he succumbs at the end of Act I. While Jap and Maurteen always hold opposing views and argue continually, Shay and Git always try to maintain a balance and calm the situation.

Jap is eager to impress his friends with his achievements and claims he has made a huge amount of money, which is a lie. He desperately dreams of going back home to Ireland and starting his own company. Not wanting to leave on his own he tries to convince the others to join him. In their opinion England is their home, because they have spent more time there than in Ireland.

In Act II Git reveals exactly how Jackie died. Jackie left Ireland in order to make some money and marry his fiancée Barbara. Jackie discovers that in the meantime she had already married someone else and becomes depressed. Because of this, Jackie commits suicide by jumping in front of a tube train after drinking heavily with his friends in a pub. Git witnessed everything, but reacted too slowly and could not help Jackie.

In memory of their friend they drink a lot and talk about their shared past. They seem to be quite disillusioned with life in England, because they have not been successful. Jap is even blamed for persuading them to emigrate to England which provokes a fierce argument amongst the friends. The mood turns more serious and gradually everyone leaves.

4.2.2 *Kings* – Coping with Memories on the Screen

Film adaptations are never just filmed equivalents of theatre plays. Directors usually cut, alter and add scenes to present their personal interpretation of the plays. Since there is a screen play of *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* it is worth analysing both the play and its adaptation. It is essential to investigate the similarities and differences of the play and the film in order to see what the playwright and the director place value on. *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* as well as *Kings* deal with the issues of coping with suicide, the loss of a friend, alcohol problems, domestic violence and unfulfilled dreams. The screen adaptation helps the audience to ‘feel’ the desperate state of the friends and their ways of coping with their memories.

In general, Collins’s *Kings* closely follows Murphy’s *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road*. While the two-act play is simply set in the side room of a pub, the film provides more action by the multiple use of flashbacks. The film appears more vivid, because there are several changes of locations, such as Ireland, London, the flat, the street, in the church, in the pub or at the airport. Both Murphy and Collins convey the same dismal and depressive atmosphere of the story and the characters’ precarious situation.

Nevertheless, some differences can be found by comparing the play and the film. The director is successful in presenting the feelings of the characters and in underlining their guilt and sorrow. The sequence analysis, which can be found in the appendix, provides a summary of the scenes of the screen adaptation to make it easier to follow the subsequent findings.

First of all, some of the characters’ names are slightly changed, which does not affect the story itself. Maurteen is made into Máirtín and Jackie’s surname is changed from Flavin to Flaherty.

Next, in the play the groups’ departure from Ireland takes place in 1975 (J. Murphy 19)⁴, whereas in the film it happens two years later, in 1977 (Collins 1)⁵.

Furthermore, the original version presents Jap’s idea of returning to Ireland and starting a company with Git (KKH 22), which is reversed in the film (K 3). Jap, however, seems

⁴ All the following quotations abbreviated KKH (*The Kings of Kilburn High Road*) are taken from MURPHY, Jimmy. *The Kings of Kilburn High Road*. London: Oberon Books, 2001.

⁵ All the following quotations abbreviated K (*Kings*) are taken from chapters of *Kings*. Dir. Tom Collins. DVD. Newgrange Pictures. 2007.

to be more desperate to go back home, so the director should not have changed this detail.

While Murphy's Joe claims that "it's an awful thing for a parent to bury a child" (KKH 35), it is Git who utters this sentence in the film (K 6). Collins may have tried to focus on Git's feeling of guilt because of his inability to stop Jackie from killing himself and so chose him to make that statement.

In the film the audience sees Joe hiding in his car, because he cannot face Jackie's father (K 8), whereas the play just informs us of Joe's absence at the mass (KKH 34). The screen adaptation underlines Joe's regrets about not having employed his friend and his partial responsibility for the tragedy. He has to cope most of all with his bad conscience resulting from having let down his friend.

Furthermore, Git has to pawn his father's watch in order to have enough money for the wake. Compared to the play, in which he receives thirty pounds (KKH 62), he only gets a twenty pound note in the film (K 9). Either the worthlessness of the watch was to be highlighted or it was just easier to use one bank note instead of an additional ten pounds.

Moreover, in Murphy's version it is unclear whether Jackie's body is shipped (KKH 21) or flown (KKH 28) back to Ireland for the funeral. It does not seem to make a difference to the story. Collins obviously shows how the coffin is loaded into the plane and taken home (K 11, 24). Going by *Aer Arann* is affordable and using a plane is quicker than using a ship.

There are further differences concerning Shay's and Maurteen's children. In the play Shay is said to have four children (KKH 43) and even a grandchild, because his seventeen-year-old daughter became pregnant (KKH 58). In the film, however, only a fifteen-year-old son is mentioned (K 12). While Maurteen is supposed to be the father of six children in the play (KKH 43), only one daughter is presented in the film version (K 5). Since the children are not essential to the story, it is not necessary to present all of them.

Joe, the boss of his own business, takes hard drugs in the film (K 3, 12, 14), whereas he only consumes alcohol in the play like his friends. The director emphasises that Joe is

the only one who actually can afford hard drugs, such as cocaine. It is also highlighted that Joe needs hard drugs to cope with the traumatic situation and all the flashbacks.

Another mismatch is the number of men working for Joe. In the film he employs fifty men (K 13), but in the play only twelve workers are in his company (KKH 36). Again, Joe's wealth is emphasised by increasing the number of employees.

Furthermore, Shay's profession is a road worker in Murphy's version (KKH 44) instead of a fruit and vegetable vendor in the film (K 4, 16). Collins probably wants to provide a different job to illustrate that compared with his friends he can deal with his low income and is not addicted to alcohol.

Finally, the most striking difference is that Jap is the one who prevents Maurteen from driving Joe's Mercedes whilst drunk. Jap's sense of responsibility is rather unbelievable, because he seems to have drunk more than anyone in the group (KKH 48). In the film, however, Git, who is more sensible than Jap, prevents Shay from driving under the influence of alcohol (K 18).

Collins, however, does not just alter scenes, he even adds some details to Murphy's original, which are not mentioned in the play at all:

- Jap steals a wreath for their departed friend Jackie (K 4), which illustrates that he cannot afford to buy one himself.
- The character of Maurteen's wife, Maggie, makes two appearances (K 5, 15) to make their relationship more real and to emphasise the tension between the couple.
- In a flashback Maurteen suffers from feelings of guilt, because he did not help Jackie when he called him (K 6), which emphasises the challenging task of coping with the past.
- In Joe's flashback he is rescued by Jackie when he falls from the boat into the sea (K 9), which triggers his feelings of guilt. This addition underlines the difficulty of coping with the loss of a friend without having had the chance to say goodbye.
- To illustrate Shay's responsibility, he is the one who accompanies Micil to the airport (K 7, 11).
- Not only Joe, but also Shay dismisses Jackie because of drunkenness (K 12). The intention of this could be to minimise Joe's guilt of being the only one who

is strong enough to fire a friend. It also highlights Jackie's alcohol problem and his inability to work properly.

- To show that Joe still cares for his friends, he returns Git's pawned watch (K 15). It is important for Joe to have a good relationship with his remaining friends, because he does not want to lose another one.

All in all, these examples illustrate the director's decision to slightly rearrange several scenes. These changes, however, only affect the original story minimally and therefore Collins' *Kings* is very close to the original play. Collins's added scenes underline the characters' attempt to cope with the traumatic loss of their friend and their guilt.

4.2.3 Ways out of Mourning – Coping with Jackie's Death

Having looked at both the play and its screen adaptation, this sub-chapter explores the characters' difficulties in coping with their friend's death. For this reason the term "mourning" is defined and the different stages of grief are examined.

Mourning is not just a sudden surge of emotion – it is a process. This process aids in coping with the loss of a beloved person. Aleida Assmann argues that the inability of mourning is a symptom for suffering from trauma (Assmann 2006: 10). Gertraud Finger presents a concept of five stages which mourners have to undergo, namely the *time of denial*, *time of emotional outburst*, *time of valediction*, *time of exhaustion* and *time of a new start*, which will be explained in more detail shortly. This, however, is not a fixed scheme all people have to go through. The time needed for every stage is individual and stages can be skipped or omitted completely. Emotions, such as fear, despair, anger and shame must be accepted as "normal" due to a grievous loss (Finger 13-14).

The following sub-sections deal with the five stages of mourning, as seen in passages of Murphy's *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* and some scenes of Collins' *Kings*, in which the five friends grieve for Jackie's death in different ways, in order to illustrate the theoretical concept.

4.2.3.1 Time of Denial

As Finger argues, the major characteristics of the denial stage are the abnegation of the death, the astonishment at the inability to cry, a feeling of emptiness and robot-like behaviour. It is hard to accept the loss of a loved-one. Hence, mourners are numbed by the shock of the death, which protects them from overpowering emotions and ensures a

distance from reality. Therefore, in a lot of cases, the mourner can appear to be quite alright (Finger 15-16).

In the play Jap is probably the best example of the stage described. Although Jap believes Jackie's death, he ignores the fact that Jackie committed suicide. Git almost mentions the cause of Jackie's death, but Jap desperately tries to stop him saying the truth and immediately changes the topic (KKH 35-36). Joe, however, insists on hearing the truth (KKH 51-55). Jap hates Git for telling the story again and becomes furious. "No! No fuckin' way Gitna. No fuckin' way I said, d'yeh hear me? Jackie Flavin wouldn't do a thing like that, he wouldn't. [...] Told yeh not to open your mouth. Bollixed the whole day now, so yeh have" (KKH 55). Jap's current circumstances are as bad as Jackie's and he "get[s] depressed as well. God there's days [he] curse[s] ever settin' foot over here. That mean [he's] gonna jump under a train?" (KKH 56). Suicide is not a possible solution for Jap, which makes it impossible for him to believe what Jackie has done.

The entire play is based on a wake in connection with heavy drinking. In general, alcohol, especially whiskey, seems to be essential to the five friends. Jap appears to be most addicted to the drug. Although Maurteen tries to stay sober, he only manages during Act I. "[T]oday is a day for drinkin'. [...] [They]'ll have a bottle and when that's gone another to wash it down!" (KKH 37-38). Alcohol seems to be the only way to cope with the tragedy. In the film Joe's wealth is underlined by taking hard drugs, probably cocaine or heroin, because he snorts a white powdery substance (K 3, 12, 14). Joe can afford expensive drugs compared to his penniless friends. On the one hand, drugs are believed to simplify the acceptance of death and on the other hand, almost all friends seem to be addicted in general.

4.2.3.2 Time of Emotional Outburst

This stage is characterised by overwhelming emotions, mood swings, irascibility and aggression, especially in connection with allocations of blame towards oneself, the dead person and God. After the time of denial, emotions erupt, which shows that one's energy returns. Most mourners feel abandoned by their loved one and react angrily and aggressively. People have difficulty accepting death. Being furious with someone must mean that the person is still alive. Aggression is an attempt to resist the finality of death and such an emotion is also an attempt to find explanations to try and comprehend the

incomprehensible. Mourners try to make sense of a loved one's death by casting blame which in itself is difficult to bear. On the one hand, the mistakes of the past cannot be undone and on the other hand, things that have not been mentioned cannot be sorted out. There is always a feeling of having done too little and the certainty that nothing can be done to rectify it. Acceptance that people are imperfect is the key to relinquishing the dead (Finger 16-19).

Joe, for instance, does not attend the funeral memorial and apologises (KKH 34). He blames his work for being late. Shortly after Jap tells him that Jackie's father asked for him, which causes feelings of guilt, he wants to send condolences (KKH 35). Joe tries to soothe his bad conscience by paying for the drinks to give his friends a good wake (KKH 37, 42). Joe is surprised why "[they] did [...] not do anythin' for [Jackie]" (KKH 54) and blames his friends for showing little interest in the problems of the deceased. At the end of the play Joe has an emotional outburst and shouts at Jap because of their argument, "[...] God forgive me but I wish it was you that went under the fuckin' train" (KKH 61).

Not only Joe but also Git, who witnessed Jackie's suicide, suffers from feelings of guilt. "I could 've stopped him lads ... all I had to do was go over to him an' he standin' there alone cryin' into the night" (KKH 55). He thinks it is his fault that Jackie died, because he reacted too slowly and could not change anything. Listening to his account of the tragedy his deep shock and distress can be felt.

Moreover, Maurteen decides to stop drinking, because Jackie managed to stay sober and his death opens Maurteen's eyes. When Maurteen is inebriated, he is aggressive and hits his wife Maggie and now he realises that he has to change his way of life. During the wake, however, his withdrawal symptoms are stronger than his mind and he consumes far too much alcohol. He regrets being in England at all and threatens and insults Maggie. In fact he blames his addiction and his imprisonment in London on her. "English fuckin' bitch! She that kept me here, she that got pregnant ... I'll break her fuckin' neck!" (KKH 64).

After having listened to the true story about Jackie's accident "Jap [holds] back his tears [and] is under immense strain in doing so" (KKH 55). Later on he loses control of his emotions and starts to cry. "[Jap] rests his head in his hands. He starts to cry slowly and builds up until his whole body opens up and envelopes him in a river of tears. He sits

bawling. After a moment Git returns to the door, he stops when he sees Jap. Jap hears him, he gets up, wiping the tears away, as if they were never there” (KKH 64). Jap finally shows his emotions, which express his grievous loss.

Like every parent Jackie’s father has great difficulties in coping with the loss of his son. “They say it’s an awful thing for a parent to bury a child. [...] [He] wouldn’t let go the coffin [...]. He’d his arms wrapped round it an’ the tears [...] spillin’ down off’a his cheeks an’ onto the wood. ‘Why?’ he ses, ‘Why did he not come home? Was he afraid we’d think less of him ‘cause he never made anythin’ of himself?’” (KKH 35). These sentences illustrate a father’s love for his son who has good as well as bad sides. He cannot suppress his tears and asks why all this happened. It is impossible for the father to understand death in this phase of the grieving process. Therefore, Git tells him that Jackie slipped and tragically died. “[He] only told his father that so not to break his heart. An’ even he didn’t believe it” (KKH 51). Nobody can be protected from reality and from death. As unbearable as it may seem initially, knowing a lot of details is essential for accepting the loss.

4.2.3.3 Time of Valediction

This phase includes restlessness, aimless activity, lack of concentration, forgetfulness, going over memories, talking about the dead person, going to the cemetery, inner dialogues with the dead as well as dreams about encounters with the dead. As in the previous phase, mood swings are commonplace, though the focus is on thinking about the dead person in order to say farewell, which helps to accept the death. Both dreams and hallucinations are expressions of intense reflection about the dead person. During the time of valediction possessions of the dead are of great value, because they are connected with memories of the deceased. The objects console the mourners and create a bond with the dead (Finger 20-21).

Actually, the play itself can be described as a time of valediction, because the five friends are at a wake for poor Jackie and constantly relive memories of their shared past adventures and their late friend. They also consume huge amounts of alcohol to pay the dead friend their respect. Although religious elements are missing completely, their sense of community is expressed through the singing of Irish rebel songs. Singing brings people closer together and is a way to express feelings. There are at least three

passages (KKH 33, 40, 41) where the friends sing together in remembrance of their friendship and Jackie.

In the play Maurteen recalls why Jackie came to England at all (KKH 53-54). He only intended to stay long enough to earn money to marry his fiancée Barbara back in Ireland. Things turned out differently. On hearing of Barbara's wedding, Jackie became severely depressed and he never made much money at all.

Funerals are sad occasions, but they help us to accept death and to let loved-ones go even though the dead will not be forgotten. Shay regrets not attending Jackie's funeral in Ireland. "Should've gone over with him. His last journey. [...] What we'll drink here today would've paid for a seat on the plane. [...] We should be at his burial, s'only right, so it is. Should be there throwin' a handful of earth in on him an' sayin' goodbye proper" (KKH 28-29). Saying farewell is essential for coping with death. Therefore, Shay longs to pay Jackie his last respects.

According to Finger, possessions are valued by mourners. At the wake the friends relive their memories of Jackie. "Jackie Flavin... a gas man, he was workin' on a tunnel extension for the underground. 'Member... he brought these helmets home with him?" (KKH 49). In Collins' *Kings* this scene is visualised (K 22). Jap holds Jackie's helmet and weeps over the deceased. The helmet is a close connection to Jackie, which leads to overwhelming emotions and makes the object valuable for Jap.

Furthermore, in the same film scene (K 22) Jackie appears to Jap, who still holds the helmet, and announces the end of the wake. This helps Jap to understand that Jackie will not come back any more. Jap's hallucination is evidence of his inner fight to accept the death. In the play, however, Jap addresses Jackie directly, and starts a conversation without hallucinations. "Well Jackie boy, guess it's just you an' me fella, just you an' me" (KKH 64).

4.2.3.4 Time of Exhaustion

Gertraud Finger states that retreat, hopelessness, depression, inner void, physical illness, danger of dying too and regression (concerning children) are the main features of this stage. After the emotional stress mourners suffer from psychological and physical exhaustion. In order to recover energy, demanding activities should be reduced. Kind actions by family members or friends are often experienced as an additional burden by grieving people. On the one hand, their world seems to have collapsed and has to be

rebuilt. On the other hand, people's self-perception and personality are impaired and have to be reinforced. Unfortunately, achieving these aims appears impossible and this leads to feelings of hopelessness (Finger 22-25).

After Jap's fights with his friends he longs to be alone. "An' I'll be goin' on me own too! [...] Can't wait the fuck to get away outta this kip an' away from yis all." (KKH 56). He wants to retreat and just be on his own, however, the others convince him to stay with them. Everything seems hopeless – Jackie died, Jap is still poor and lives in bad conditions in London, longing to return home to Ireland.

4.2.3.5 Time for a New Start

The final phase of Finger's concept is defined by the acceptance of death, the decision to live and the search for new relationships. The most difficult thing during the time of grief is the final acceptance of the separation from the dead. After the death of a dear family member or friend it becomes clear that life is not over after all – the incident even leads to new experiences and a wider view of the world. Life is limited and dealing with death makes us change our lifestyles (Finger 26-27).

Initially, Maurteen is the only one of the group who dares to give life a new try. Right at the beginning of the play, so probably right after he has heard of Jackie's suicide, he is convinced that he has to stop drinking (KKH 32) and start a new life with his wife and children in London. He even wants to join Alcoholics Anonymous. "AA. A fuckin' A boys, that's how serious I am, alright?" (KKH 31). Unfortunately, he is unsuccessful, because Jap is not supportive and he cannot cope with the withdrawal symptoms (KKH 38-39).

The others dream about returning to Ireland, but probably none of them ever will. After the analysis of the play and the film it can be concluded that all characters are stuck in their own miserable lives.

4.2.4 Alcoholism – A Coping Strategy

Alcohol plays an essential role in *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road*. Excessive drinking throughout the play helps the characters cope with their friend's death and with their memories. Therefore, it is worth looking more closely at the impact of alcohol as far as suicide attempts and violence are concerned.

4.2.4.1 Alcoholism and Suicide

The five friends in *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* only start to reflect about their lives because of the tragic loss of their friend Jackie. Thus, in this case suicide is the impetus to analyse their current situation. The group's lifestyle closely resembles Jackie's. The majority are heavy drinkers (e.g. Git, Shay, Joe) or even have a drinking problem (e.g. Maurteen and Jap) and some of them are unemployed and depressed (e.g. Jap and Git). Although Jackie did not commit suicide because of his drinking problem in the first place but mainly because of Barbara and his general living condition, the men might be in danger of taking their own lives as well.

George E. Murphy defines suicide as “the act of taking one's life voluntarily and intentionally. Since the deceased cannot testify as to his or her intent, the conclusion must be drawn by inference” (G. Murphy 10). Murphy presents an elaborated case study of alcoholics who kill themselves. He divides his findings according to the onset of their addiction (before age 25, from age 25 to 44, at age 45 years or later). The six friends in *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* set foot in England in 1975 and they have not been back home for about thirty years, which implies that they were teenagers when they left Ireland (KKH 18-19). Therefore, the play concentrates on men who are affected by the onset of alcoholism before the age of 25.

The case study illustrates that the men under consideration committed suicide between the ages of 29 and 69, the majority taking their lives at the age of 37. Within their family histories a great number of heavy drinkers or alcoholics can be found, whereas their parental home was intact to a large extent. An important feature of the study is that the majority of the men investigated lived alone and did not have much social support or friends (G. Murphy 94-97).

There are similarities to Jimmy Murphy's play. It can be assumed that the friends start heavy drinking when they emigrate (or even earlier) in order to celebrate their departure and their anticipated fortune. In the first chapter of the film the young men are excited, on the ship to England with bottles of beer in their hands. At that time none of them is an alcoholic, but they gradually continue drinking. Because of Jackie's unrequited love and his unemployment he becomes more and more depressed and requires larger amounts of alcohol. Jackie, however, realises he has an alcohol problem and stops drinking. Unfortunately, his depression persists, which finally leads to his suicide on his fiftieth birthday. Compared with the previously mentioned study, Jackie fits well into

the age range. Moreover, Jackie lacks social support even though he has some friends. Due to their excessive drinking they have difficulties in understanding his abstinence and are of no help. In other words, Jackie's death resembles other suicides and is not an isolated case.

Interestingly enough, Jackie who "was workin' on a tunnel extension for the underground" (KKH 49), takes his life by jumping in front of a tube train. It is very probable that his work had a strong impact on him and his way of thinking. He also might have heard of similar suicide cases. Since he works for the underground he knows that trains come in extremely quickly and despite braking can kill a person all too easily. Jackie may have thought about committing suicide for a long time.

Suicide appears to be the only way out of Jackie's miserable life. His friends are incapable of helping him, because they have not managed to live a proper life without addiction either. At least Jackie succeeds in giving up alcohol, but his memories of his unrequited love and his meaningless life persist. It is impossible for Jackie to cope with his depression and his faults, thus he chooses death to end his misery.

4.2.4.2 Alcoholism and Violence

Alcohol addiction does not necessarily have to lead to suicide, but may have different effects on the dependant. According to Ihsan M Salloum

[v]iolence is [...] a significant problem among some individuals with psychiatric disorders and alcoholism or other substance use disorders. Violent behaviours such as homicide, assaults and domestic violence cause considerable suffering for families and society. [...] The association between violence, alcoholism and male gender is well documented (Salloum 1-3).

In the play *Maurteen*, for instance, hits his wife Maggie. Jackie's sudden death makes him recognise his addiction and its connection with domestic violence. *Maurteen* has already lost a friend and does not want to lose his wife too. However, he is not strong-minded enough to stop drinking and endure the withdrawal symptoms. At least he tries to make a change and shows his affection for Maggie, because he does not want to hurt her any more.

During the first three months, relapses are most likely to appear. Some alcoholic dependants drink when they are depressed, angry, bored or anxious, while others consume alcohol to be part of a group or to have fun. Thus, it is important to use coping skills to manage difficult situations (Salloum 59-61).

He should have joined Alcoholics Anonymous immediately, instead he claims he's "gonna ring them tomorrow [...] and sort it all out" (KKH 32). It is extremely difficult to leave the vicious circle of drinking on one's own. The caregivers of a self-help programme such as AA provide advice and techniques to help resist temptation as well as the chance to talk to other people who suffer from the same problem (Salloum 53).

The reason for Maurteen's motivation for handling his drinking problem is Jackie's suicide. Coping with the sudden and tragic loss is challenging for all the characters in the play. In addition, Maurteen starts reflecting about his own life and his faults and is determined to change his way of life. Alcohol makes him lose control and hit his wife and he finally realises that domestic violence is inappropriate in a love relationship. Despite all his efforts, he does not manage to stay away from whiskey and starts drinking again. He demands too much of himself, which leads to a relapse in addiction. With Maurteen's struggle to live a decent life, the difficulty of coping with trauma is emphasised. Alcohol helps him to forget his misery and makes him happy – at least for a while – however, it does not solve the problems.

5. MARINA CARR

5.1 *The Writer*

The playwright Marina Carr was born in 1964 and raised in County Offaly in Ireland. She took her degree in English and Philosophy at University College Dublin. Up to now Carr has written several plays, including *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), *By the Bog of Cats* (1998) and *On Raftery's Hill* (2000) (Sihra 62). According to Lyn Gardner from *The Guardian*, Marina Carr “has emerged as Ireland’s premier female playwright” (Gardner 2004: 1). However, her plays have been severely criticised, because damaged women, bad mothers and dysfunctional families are portrayed (Gardner 2004: 1-2). In the interview with Lyn Gardner, Carr states that plays “are written with the imagination, not with the head”, thus she thinks that the moral police would be the death of art (Gardner 2004: 2). Marina Carr describes her plays as funny, because they find humour in the tragic and prevent the audience from focusing too much on doom and gloom (Gardner 2004: 2). Carr loves writing, because it is practical: “It is about getting from one full stop to the next. It is only afterwards that you know what it means. While you are doing it, it is purely instinctive” (Gardner 2004: 2).

Eamonn Carr is surprised that the central characters of the play under consideration, *On Raftery's Hill*, do not commit suicide and thus, the play ends quite optimistically (E. Carr 149). In her interview Melissa Sihra addresses that issue and wants to know why the ending of Marina Carr’s tragedy is different from other plays. Ironically, Marina Carr answers that at least the cat dies. The playwright does not think that any character in the play deserves death. If they had earned their death, she would have released them. It is a kind of purgatorial entrapment. Carr admits that she is never aware of the characters’ fate whilst writing the play (Sihra 60).

The playwright explains to Sihra that she sometimes does not know what it is that keeps her writing. Carr just knows that everything would fall apart if she were to stop. Like any other job, being a writer can be both frustrating and satisfying. She sometimes reaches her limits when she cannot find the words to express her thoughts. Interestingly enough, Carr neither likes reading nor watching her own plays, because, in her opinion, the actors make her plays better than they are (Sihra 61).

The following chapters focus on Marina Carr's play *On Raftery's Hill*. The characters' strategies of coping with traumatic experiences, such as physical, psychological and sexual abuse, incest, rejection as well as the loss of the mother, will be investigated. After a short plot summary the issue of abuse as a traumatic event is analysed in more detail. Moreover, it will be dealt with the protagonists' problems of leaving home, as well as alcoholism as a coping strategy.

5.2 On Raftery's Hill – An Example of Coping with Traumatic Events

5.2.1 Plot Summary

Marina Carr's two-act play *On Raftery's Hill* is set in the kitchen of the Raftery household. The Raftery family consists of the father Redmond (in his sixties), who is called Red for short, his three children Dinah (39), the mentally retarded Ded (mid-thirties), and Sorrel (18), and their grandmother Shalome. Their mother died many years before.

Red Raftery is the head of the family. On the one hand, he is dominant, brutal and threatens his children, but on the other hand, he occasionally shows a certain amount of feeling towards his family. One of his passions is hunting and gutting animals, especially hares. He thinks about signing the farm over to his eldest daughter Dinah. When Dinah was twelve years old, he sexually abused her the first time, which led to her pregnancy with Sorrel. Both, father and daughter, have kept silent about this incestuous affair for years, and Raftery promises not to touch Sorrel. Raftery also has problems with his only son Ded. He always emphasises that he could have put him into a lunatic asylum but did not due to the father's overwhelming kindness. However, Ded is not allowed to stay in the house. Because he is afraid of his father, Ded avoids the house and prefers to live in the cowshed. Ded's clothes are always covered in cow dung. In the shed he is free to play the fiddle, because his father cannot stand the music. He seems to be the only one who misses his late mother. The father is glad that Ded does not live like an animal as he smokes, eats and plays the fiddle. Raftery's best friend is Isaac Dunn, who is in his sixties.

Dinah assumes the role of the mother of the family and in fact, she is Sorrel's biological mother. She is worried that she will be left alone on the farm with her father, Ded and

Granny, if Sorrel gets married to Dara Mood, who is in his twenties and has a small farm. She is desperate and fears that she might die on the Hill without having lived properly. Dinah hates her mother, because she did not try to protect her from her father's cruelty. People say that her mother was an angel, but this is not Dinah's experience.

Their grandmother has mental problems and constantly wants to leave Raftery's Hill. She longs to go back to Kinneygar to see her beloved daddy, who used to take her boating. However, when she married Brian Raftery, her father broke off all contact with her. Granny is not able to leave the house and never gets any further than the end of the lane. She says that her son Red has become as rough and ignorant as his father, Old Raftery.

One night, Dara Mood visits his beloved Sorrel. They think that Sorrel's father has already gone to bed, however, he is standing on the landing, eavesdropping on their conversation. Dara thinks about purchasing the Raftery farm. Dara confesses that he dislikes Red Raftery. Sorrel does not care for her father very much but resents Dara talking badly of him and so she defends her father. Dara, however, is worried about Sorrel's well-being if she were to remain at the farm. Consequently he wishes to take her with him. Sorrel remarks rather ignorantly that her dad has always been good to her. However, she also admits that she can imagine living with Dara, because her father will eventually die and then they would be able to enjoy themselves. After Dara kisses her goodbye and leaves, Raftery comes down the stairs. He is furious, because he thinks his daughter wishes him dead. He brutally illustrates how to gut a hare and then cuts off her clothes and rapes his youngest child. Sorrel screams for Dinah, Ded and Granny, but nobody comes to help her.

Three weeks later, Sorrel talks to her brother and accuses him of not coming to her aid even though he could hear her screaming. Ded feels helpless about his father's brutality as he has always been made out to be the black sheep of the family. Then Dinah enters and a fight starts between her and Ded, because he is not allowed inside the house. After Dinah throws her brother out of the house, Sorrel raises the issue of her abuse again. She assumes that incest is a problem in the family and directly raises the question of whether Dinah is her real mother. Dinah, however, denies her sister's assumption and wants to make preparations for Sorrel's wedding. She admits that their father can be very good sometimes, because he wants Sorrel to have a nice wedding with no expense

spared. Dinah sadly explains that nobody had ever proposed to her and for that reason she is still alone. She would never have had time for a relationship, because she had to care for her little sister. Dinah has suffered and been a victim all her life just to protect her siblings from being (sexually) abused. However, her father broke his promise and raped his youngest daughter. Red Raftery does not see or is not able to see what he did wrong and claims that he barely went near her. Ded worries that he might be the next one to be harmed by their father.

Because of the wedding and to console Sorrel after the rape, Red Raftery decides to offer Dara Mood fifty acres of his land and twenty thousand pounds. Dara, however, disagrees, because of his pride, and he thinks this is an ungracious way to get money. He dreams of buying land himself for Sorrel. A quarrel starts, because Sorrel feels that Dara wants to make decisions for her. The fight escalates. Sorrel defends her father and accuses her future husband of pride and of trying to make her dependent on him. In anger and despair, Sorrel breaks the engagement. When Dinah hears the news she is outraged, because she has always wanted her sister to live a happy life. In Dinah's opinion, Sorrel is prepared to throw everything away just because she had been sexually abused. Unfortunately, Dinah cannot convince her little sister (who actually is her daughter) to apologize and marry Dara Mood to have a better life. Therefore, Sorrel continues to live on Raftery's Hill together with her siblings, Granny and her father.

5.2.2 Sexual Abuse as a Traumatic Event

In Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* (child) abuse and domestic violence are major topics, besides "issues of power, sexuality, secrecy, shame, dysfunction, inferiority, [and] indignity" (E. Carr 138). The characters suffer from verbal, physical, psychological or sexual abuse. Ded, the mentally retarded son of the Raftery family, experiences constant rejection, hatred and discrimination by his father. As a consequence, they have a poor father-son-relationship. The relationship between Red Raftery and his daughters is slightly better as far as day-to-day living is concerned – they are at least allowed to live inside the house. However, Dinah and Sorrel are victims of molestation. While Dinah has repeatedly been sexually abused since she was twelve and is more of a wife to Red than his daughter, her little sister is raped for the first time at the age of eighteen by her domineering father. Even their grandmother Shalome has to cope with the trauma of sexual violence inflicted by her own father. It seems as if the vicious cycle of violence has continued throughout the generations: Old Raftery abuses

his daughter Shalome, who then has a bad relationship with her son Red, who again abuses his children. “[Marina] Carr captures the way abuse is compartmentalised within the minds of victims and how personalities, through the experience of [...] consistent trauma, [...] [may lead] to multiple personality disorder” (E. Carr 146). Eamonn Carr argues that abuse “has long term consequences for many, ranging from eating disorders to inability to trust potential parents, from depression and self-laceration to suicidal tendencies” (E. Carr 149). In order to understand the problem of sexual abuse, it is vital to investigate the possible reasons for committing a sexual offence, the impacts these traumatic events can have on the psyche and what the majority of victims have to cope with.

5.2.2.1 Sexual Abuse – A Short Definition

Marlene Stein-Hilbers differentiates *sexualised violence* from *sexual violence*. The former means an act of using sexuality as a medium to satisfy non-sexual needs, such as demonstrating power or confirming one’s masculinity. In contrast, sexual violence is defined as the desire for sexual satisfaction. In general, the two terms under consideration are, however, used synonymously (Stein-Hilbers 148). The head of the Raftery family, Red, is a sex offender. He seems to rape his children for satisfaction as well as demonstration of his power.

Girls and boys as well as women and men can be affected by sexualised violence. Although men⁶ tend to be the perpetrators, women and children of both sexes can be victims. Through this form of violence an imbalance in power is manifested between the sexes. As a consequence, violence is used as a means of repression of the female and young body, and the idea of patriarchy is reflected (Stein-Hilbers 148-149). In *On Raftery’s Hill* two women are sexually abused – Dinah has been raped since she was twelve years old and Sorrel for the first time at the age of eighteen. It is unclear if their brother Ded has experienced sexual violence, but it might explain his fear of his father.

In addition to the satisfaction of sexual needs, children are abused to be harmed and degraded. Among the victims are particularly children under the age of fourteen of whom about 75 per cent are girls and 25 per cent boys. Sexualised violence mostly happens in the family environment and the children are repeatedly abused (Stein-Hilbers 149, 153). John Q. La Fond states that

⁶ „Es kann [...] mit einiger Berechtigung angenommen werden, dass etwa 80 Prozent der sexuell missbrauchenden Erwachsenen und Jugendlichen männlichen Geschlechts sind“(Kavemann 161).

[m]ost victims of sex crimes know their attackers. Three out of four rape/sexual assault victimizations involved offenders (both single and multiple-offender incidents) with whom the victim had a prior relationship, such as a family, intimate, or acquaintance relationship. [...] Strangers commit fewer than 10% of all child molestations. The majority of sex crimes against children are committed by fathers (20%), stepfathers (29%), other relatives (11%), and acquaintances (30%) (La Fond 22-23).

Just like in most sex crimes, the sexual offender is known to the victims in the play under consideration. Sexual abuse happens in the Raftery family, and Dinah has been raped for over 28 years. So far, it has only happened once to the youngest daughter, Sorrel. They know their attacker – their father, Red Raftery.

Sexual offences do not just cause physical harm but serious psychological damage, which is much more difficult to cure and cope with. Rape victims are in danger of suffering from depression and getting addicted to drugs and alcohol. They are more likely to be afflicted by long-term symptoms, such as chronic headaches, fatigue, sleep disturbance, nausea, eating disorders or suicide attempts (La Fond 24). For instance, all members of the Raftery family drink alcohol and it can be assumed that they actually are addicted to that legal drug. It is, however, unclear if any of them suffers from the long-term symptoms described above. It is only mentioned that Sorrel rarely eats after the abuse. In addition to these effects, La Fond argues that many abused children have difficulty trusting other people and are not able to develop interpersonal relationships (La Fond 27). Sorrel exemplifies this inability to trust others. Although being in love with Dara Mood, she feels that she cannot marry him, because she thinks he would also oppress her. Thus, she defends her father and decides to stay with her family.

La Fond reports that almost one third of sexually abused people suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Rape victims re-experience the traumatic event in flashbacks or nightmares. Therefore, they avoid people with an appearance similar to that of the perpetrator and in addition they shy away from situations that might trigger these memories in order not to relive the horror of the crime. Moreover, many sexually molested people have to cope with unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (La Fond 24-25). Marina Carr presents characters who try to cope with their traumatic events. She does not directly mention any flashbacks or nightmares, but it can be assumed that the victims suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. At least Sorrel seems to fear that the marriage would trigger memories of the rape, which might be a reason for her decision to stay single.

According to Silke-Brigitta Gahleitner, traumatic incidents, such as sexual abuse, also concern the concept of gender. The symptoms of sexual violence in early childhood show minor differences between boys and girls. Both sexes have problems talking about the violence experienced; most of them even ask for help only decades later. A lot of them have gaps in their memory of the traumatic event and therefore are not able to recall all the details (Gahleitner 218-223). Sorrel illustrates how difficult it is to talk about the horrible experience. It is only after three weeks that she accuses her brother of not helping her when she needed him. It is also probable that Ded had been sexually abused in the past and oppressed his memories. These gaps in his memory make it impossible to talk about the rape but could explain his distanced attitude towards his father.

Sexual assault in childhood can still have a strong influence on the victims in adulthood. A great number of victims try to overcome the crisis and some of them even consider committing suicide. While men tend to trivialize traumatic situations, women are in danger of remaining victims. In therapy women often complain about psychosomatic disorders, feelings of self-destruction, sexual degradation, and the assumption of being a victim in many other daily situations. Men, on the other hand, state that they take drugs, have aggressive phantasies, and have a fear of failure (Gahleitner 218-223. 228). Dinah is the one who has been abused the longest. However, she does not seem to have the status of a victim that she had at the age of twelve. She has become a rough woman and acts like Red Raftery's wife rather than his daughter. Sorrel appears to feel degraded and uncertain whether or not to marry her boyfriend.

Focusing on the perpetrators, La Fond lists various reasons for committing sex offences. Family dysfunction, for instance, could be an indicator of sexual abuse. Moreover, a small number of abusers have been raped themselves in the past, however, this does not prove that there is a direct link between being raped as a child and transforming into a molester. It is also suggested that psychopathy, which is a personality disorder, might be a reason for committing sex offences (La Fond 36-40). Psychopaths "tend to be individuals who are extremely self-centred, try to manipulate others for their own gain, and like to dominate other people" (La Fond 40). Besides Shalome's father, who is only presented through her stories, Red Raftery is the major offender in *On Raftery's Hill*. It is unclear if he had been sexually abused in childhood, but he definitely had a harsh time, because he had a bad relationship with his father and he was never wanted by his

mother. Red could be described as a psychopath, because he is very selfish and enjoys his dominance over his children.

Philip G. Zimbardo investigates how ‘good people’ can turn into perpetrators (Zimbardo 21-50). He defines ‘evil’ as “intentionally behaving, or causing others to act in ways that demean, dehumanize, harm, destroy, or kill innocent people” (Zimbardo 22). This means that a person’s bad behaviour has negative consequences on others (Zimbardo 22). It is difficult to imagine living and acting like perpetrators and doing their unthinkable deeds. Zimbardo tries to explain that everybody has the potential to be good or evil, when he uses Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s words: the line between good and evil lies in the centre of every human heart (Zimbardo 25). “We are not born with tendencies toward good or evil but with mental templates to do *either*” (Zimbardo 26). Offenders do not have to be evil because of their genes. They can choose between good and evil in their hearts. The characters in *On Raftery’s Hill* could change their fate and turn to love instead of hatred.

The following sub-chapter analyses what the members of the Raftery family had to go through in the past. It illustrates how they try to cope with their memories and traumatic experiences and whether they manage to break the cycle of violence.

5.2.2.2 *Shalome – Coping with Sexual Abuse*

Shalome Raftery, Red’s mother, marks the beginning of the cycle of violence in Marina Carr’s *On Raftery’s Hill*. Eamonn Carr points out that Shalome has an incestuous relationship with her father. Red Raftery, the male main character of the play, is the by-product of these scandalous circumstances (E. Carr 141). Granny continuously tries to leave Raftery’s Hill in order to “[go] back to Kinneygar and to [her] Daddy” (ORH 10)⁷ – but without success. She misses her father who broke the family ties, because he could not bear her marriage with Brian Raftery (ORH 11).

Even before sexual maturity Shalome seems to have been a victim of child molestation when she tells her grand-daughters about the encounter with a gorilla:

Once a man with a gorilla came to our house and the gorilla licked me all over as if I were its baby and the old man told me about the language of gorillas, how they encompassed the poetry of sea ... I didn’t know what he meant ... still don’t. [...] And Mother came and saw me in the arms of the gorilla and was terrified it would harm me and shouts at the man and the gorilla runs down the verandah with me gripped tightly in its armpit. Next thing myself and the gorilla

⁷ All the following quotations abbreviated as ORH (*On Raftery’s Hill*) are taken from Marina CARR, *On Raftery’s Hill* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000).

are looking down at Mother and the old man, we're up an orange tree. [...] I couldn't have been more than three, for Mother died [...] and we left India and came back to Kinneygar (ORH 12-13).

The gorilla could be a metaphor for a child offender. As Shalome was still quite young (three years of age) she may have built a picture of the incident in her mind that helps her to cope with the abuse. For a child the situation must have been totally incomprehensible and so she substitutes the offender with an animal – she dehumanises him to create a greater distance between the man and herself. Shalome recounts that her mother was afraid of seeing her little child in the arms of that creature. In contrast to Dinah's mother, who sends her twelve-year-old to lie with her father (ORH 57), Shalome's mother tries to protect her child. However, both mothers die rather young and their girls have to become independent rather quickly. Since Shalome experienced incest herself, she is worried about her abused grand-daughter Sorrel. She admits that she "wanted to stop it" (ORH 48), but most probably she had flashbacks of being raped by her father and, feeling like a victim, was unable to stand up against the perpetrator.

Margaret Maxwell argues that Shalome's marriage to Brian Raftery is meant to free her from her father's authority, however at the same time, she idealises her father who used to take her boating. Despite the traumatic incident she cannot verbalise the true nature of her relationship with her father and represses the abuse. Shalome is unable to cope with her past and creates a supernatural picture of her father in her head (Maxwell 466-467). When her son, Red, asks if she can remember her father's funeral (ORH 58), she answers that "Daddies never die, they just fake rigor mortis and all the time they're throwing tantrums in the coffin, claw marks on the lid" (ORH 59).

In order to understand Shalome's dependence on her father, Maxwell investigates the pronunciation of Shalome's name since she declares that "[no] one has ever pronounced [her] name nicer than Daddy" (ORH 48). Maxwell states that the atypical Irish name could be pronounced as 'Shal-o-me' (shall owe me) which might indicate the father's dominance and power over his daughter, as well as the possession of his child. Her name might also be pronounced 'Shalo-me' (shallow me) to illustrate her low self-esteem and her status as a victim. It is also possible to call her 'Shhh-alome' which underlines the silencing imposed by incest. The father's authority can be most expressed by pronouncing her name 'Shhh-alo-me' (Shhh! Allow me) (Maxwell 467). The name 'Shalome' could also have been chosen, because it is "evocative of a biblical paradigm of (step)father-daughter relations: that of Herod Antipas and Salome" (Maxwell 467).

Salome was served the head of John the Baptist as a revenge on Herod and Herodia because of their disregard for rules of exogamy (Maxwell 467).

Shalome has always longed for freedom and her only chance of coping with her memory of the trauma is to “[replace] her traumatic experience with a wished-for reality, [to encapsulate] this desire in an innocuous image, and, thus, is able to revere an abusive father as a caring one” (Maxwell 468). Resigning, she admits that she has always waited for her life to start, but somehow it never has (ORH 14). She just wants to say “Goodbye Raftery’s Hill. I shall not miss you” (ORH 10), but she does not seem to finally leave that place, even though Kinneygar is only 20 miles down the road (ORH 47), because deep inside she knows that her father is dead and is not the good man she has always portrayed him as. In Maxwell’s words “Shalome is still caught in her cycle of resounding fight and entrapment” (Maxwell 477).

5.2.2.3 Red – Coping with Being an Incestuous Child

Redmond Raftery appears to be the strong, brutal, dominant, and frightening male head of the house (e.g. “[he] grabs [Sorrel] suddenly and holds her in a vice grip. Sorrel struggles pointlessly against the strength of him” (ORH 34)). Even his friend Isaac accuses Red of being too rough on his children (ORH 21) and asks why he cannot leave them alone (ORH 16). However, there are a few moments when Red can act like a caring and loving father. He repeatedly emphasises that “[any] other father’d have [Ded] in an asylum. Not [him] though [...] [although his] only son and heir can’t tell night from day” (ORH 17). He also orders Dinah to go and see if Ded is alright (ORH 50). Red also cleans his mother’s face and hands with a dishcloth and shows some affection towards her (ORH 29).

It is obvious that Red Raftery has difficulties in coping with the fact that he is the child of an incestuous relationship. Maxwell emphasises that the truth of his biological father is never verbalised in the play, but repeatedly hinted at (Maxwell 469-470), for instance, when Red is described as “the spih” of his grandfather (ORH 58). Red Raftery is the next element in the cycle of violence. His mother conceals the truth about his father and invents stories of men from foreign countries, such as Germany or England (ORH 14; 26). One day she tells Red that “[his] real father was an English captain” (ORH 26). When Red accuses her of being a liar, she replies that it does not matter if his father was German or English as long as it was not Old Raftery (ORH 26). He never had the

chance to establish a loving relationship with his father. Red Raftery has problems remembering his father, which leads to the assumption that their relationship was rather poor and at the same time it seems that Red misses him: “d’ya know I can’t ever remember talkin to him” (ORH 41). Red Raftery has never understood why he could not feel a connection with his so-called father, Old Raftery, because his real father actually was his grand-father. This illustrates that he suffers from his mother’s abuse and the bad father-son relationship, so that he does not find a proper way of coping with these circumstances. This might be his reason for withdrawing from social life. The play presents a tension between the village and Raftery’s Hill. Red’s dislike for the people from the village can be seen in his claim that there is always trouble in the village (ORH 20).

Red might also be traumatised, because he has never been cared for in a loving way by his mother. Shalome even confesses that “[Red is] not the son [she] wanted, not by a long shot” (ORH 27). Her statement underlines the disgust she experienced when she was abused. Her son always reminds her of her father’s horrible deed, which prevents her from truly loving her child. One day Shalome talks about Red’s childhood and her inferiority towards Old Raftery:

You were always so clever, Redmond. Always. I wanted you educated, I wanted to send you away to the Jesuits, away from this horrible Hill. But no, Old Raftery wanted you rough and ignorant like himself. [...] You haven’t turned out the way I planned, Redmond Raftery. [...] You could’ve amounted to something, Redmond, if old Raftery had let me have my way (ORH 25).

It is shown that Shalome tried to care for her son and actually wanted the best for him, but she was not strong enough to oppose her husband. As a consequence, Red became a brutal, selfish and rough man who continuously tortured his own children.

However, Red Raftery does not only have the status of being a victim of incest but acts as a sexual offender himself. This supports La Fond’s argument that some rape victims become future sexual abusers (La Fond 38). Raftery first rapes his daughter Dinah when she is only twelve years of age (ORH 57). This, however, was not a one-off situation. According to Eamonn Carr, a relationship has been developed, which resembles the one of a disgruntled couple (E. Carr 144). For instance, Red attempts “to attract the attention of Dinah, who is in her bedroom. [...] He sings, offers to bring her up a whiskey and is annoyed by her rejection” (E. Carr 144) Their conversations usually are of a very brutal tone.

Dinah has always tried to protect Sorrel from being abused by her father. She emphasises that she does not want Red to touch Sorrel (ORH 27). The head of the house breaks his promise and rapes his little daughter (ORH 35) because of jealousy. He cannot bear the fact of Sorrel marrying Dara Mood, which would mean the loss of power over her. “His justification for his assault is because his daughter has betrayed him by talking badly about him [...]” (E. Carr 145). He does not want Dara Mood to lay his hands on her (ORH 15) and insists on deciding on her future: “Sorrel is my daughter first and everything concerning her, concerns me, includin marriage proposals” (ORH 21). When Dinah confronts him about the offence, he plays down the cruelty of the rape and claims that “[he] barely went near her” (ORH 45).

Thus, Red Raftery is, on the one hand, a victim of molestation and incest, because he is the unwanted by-product of his mother’s being abused, which is only a small excuse for his cruelty. But on the other hand, he becomes a perpetrator himself and is responsible for even more suffering and another incestuous child despite knowing how difficult life as an unwanted child can be.

5.2.2.4 Dinah – Coping with Sexual Abuse

On Raftery’s Hill presents parallels between Dinah and her grandmother Shalome. Both women are raped by their fathers when they are quite young. And both of them do not only have to cope with the traumatic event of being abused but also with the fact of becoming pregnant by their own fathers.

Dinah dislikes, even hates, her mother, which is displayed in her description of her mother: “[Our mother] was allas sick, long as I can remember anyway ... lyin in the back parlour wud a dish cloth on her head ... never liked the woman, may god forgive me. [...] Fierce selfish, and Ded was her favourite” (ORH 40). According to Maxwell, Dinah feels betrayed by her mother, who withdraws from domestic duties, abdicates maternal responsibility and refuses to acknowledge what is going on (Maxwell 475). By claiming that Dinah takes after her father (ORH 40) the mother bond is totally destroyed (Maxwell 475).

Her father, the perpetrator, however, is presented in a more positive light. Dinah’s memories of her father-daughter relationship are similar to Shalome’s:

Any attention I goh was from Daddy. He used take me up the fields wud him, up on hees shoulders, thought I was a giant. I went everywhere wud him, he’d be mendin fences and I’d be playin wud me dolls beside him, or savin the hay, he’d throw me up on the haycocks and I’d

roll down them and he'd ketch me, taught me to fish. [...] And I'd stand there watchin him, as proud a meself ... He knew how to build up a child's heart ... Daddy, never forgeh him for thah (ORH 40).

Like Shalome, she idealises her father and represses all the pain he caused her. Dinah portrays her mother as the culprit of the incest, because it is her mother who does not want to have sexual intercourse with her husband. She does not intervene when Red Raftery abuses the daughter (ORH 57). Dinah's antipathy towards her mother can be seen when she says, "[may] she roast like a boar on a spih in the courtyards of Hell" (ORH 28). Reconciliation with her mother seems almost impossible.

Eamonn Carr poses the question why "Dinah, as a mature, adult still [participates] in sexual activity with [her father] as this, it seems, is not only for his sole pleasure" (E. Carr 146). There is a complicated bond between these two characters, which is difficult to understand. Sorrel admits that she sometimes hears the nocturnal sexual intercourse and forces Dinah to explain why they still carry on:

So we do ud from time to time, allas in the pitch dark, never a word, ud's nowan's bleddy business. Who's ud hurtin? And we want ud to stop. You don't believe thah. You don't believe anythin good abouh me and Daddy, we don't aither buh we want ud to stop. Ud's just like children playin in a field ah some awful game before laws was made [...] (ORH 57-58).

The reason for this could be that rape victims may suffer from multiple personality disorders (E. Carr 146). E. Carr explains that the playwright

captures the way abuse is compartmentalised within the minds of victims and how personalities, through the experience of incomprehensive and consistent trauma, disassociate from pain and can mentally split, leading to multiple personality disorders (E. Carr 146).

In order to explain why some spouses stay with their aggressor, Arriaga et al. argue that some victims of aggression and abuse play down the seriousness of the situation and do not seek help, because they do not perceive it as a problem. Their partners are often successful in convincing their victim that the situation is not that bad, which leads to the victim's decline. They start feeling more depressed, anxious and uncertain (Arriaga et al. 379). The victim, thus, adopts a less negative view of the partner's aggression than an outsider would have (Arriaga et al. 372).

Coping with sexual offences is a challenge, and Dinah finds her own way to live with her memories. She knows that her father committed a crime by abusing her, which makes her protect her incestuous daughter. Dinah stands up for Sorrel by forcefully telling Red not to touch Sorrel (ORH 29). After the abuse, she wants to know where he would stop, because the marks of the rape have not healed in three weeks (ORH 44-45).

Disappointedly she asks, “Why couldn’t ya a just lave her alone? The wan perfect thing in this house” (ORH 45). It is obvious that she loves Sorrel and tries to protect her from any harm. What is surprising and totally incomprehensible is that she does not intervene when Sorrel desperately cries for help (ORH 35). Dinah may have felt paralysed, because of flashbacks of her own abuse. Eamonn Carr argues that “Dinah wants Sorrel to be safe, and simultaneously, she is certainly jealous of her, is angered by her possibilities to leave Raftery’s Hill and despises her chance of freedom through marriage to Dara Mood” (E. Carr 147).

Dinah appears to be jealous of her incestuous daughter towards the end of the play. When Sorrel poses the question why Dinah never married, she has to confess that nobody has ever asked her and she has always had to care for Sorrel anyway (ORH 39). Compared with Sorrel, she has never had the chance to live the way she wanted to due to her daughter and the urge to protect her. She did not have anyone who looked after her the way she looked after Sorrel (ORH 57). Because of the incest she feels she has to break up with her boyfriend and therefore sacrifices her whole life for Sorrel (ORH 55). No wonder that Dinah feels betrayed because of Sorrel’s imprudent behaviour towards her father:

For eighteen year I watched thah wan like a hawk, protected her from you, and what does the stupid little bitch go and do? Gives ouh about you under your own roof. [...] Doesn’t she know you be paddin round the duurs and landins, wud your cloven toes, spyin on everywan, waitin to pounce? I seen pictures a your toes in books, books about devils wud their toes all stuck together (ORH 45).

One major aim in Dinah’s life has always been to make Sorrel happy without experiencing abuse. It seems as if everything has been shattered now. Dinah is angry with her father, who did not keep his promise, as well as with Sorrel, who was naïve enough to talk badly about their father inside their house. In a rage, she even compares Red Raftery to the devil himself that spies on them.

5.2.2.5 Sorrel – Coping with Sexual Abuse

Sorrel is Red Raftery’s daughter and Dinah’s supposed sibling. It turns out, however, that Dinah is actually Sorrel’s biological mother (Maxwell 472). She has always been cared for and protected against her cruel father by Dinah. Sorrel was told that her mother died giving birth to her (ORH 38), because she has no memories of her mother at all. So, Sorrel wants to know what her mother was like. Dinah recalls that she was good-looking just like Sorrel, but always sick without caring much for her family (ORH

Sorrel is “noh wan bih alrigh ... just cries and cries, won’t ate anything, just keeps takin a bah” (ORH 44). She also emphasises that the marks on her have not healed in three weeks (ORH 45). After the sexual abuse by her father, she tries to become as clean as possible again, but she is ashamed of not being untouched any more. Bathing several times a day (“Ya’d wan already today and two last night” (ORH 46)) seems to comfort her at least a bit. The bath might be a metaphor for washing away the sin of sexual offence. Even Red Raftery tries to whitewash his past, but Dinah notes that not even the river Shannon would wash him clean (ORH 46).

Due to the traumatic incident Sorrel refuses to come back to the Hill again and is determined to live in the Village with Dara Mood (ORH 39), but in fact, she stays at Raftery’s Hill in the end (ORH 59). On the one hand, she wants to leave this horrible place and especially her father. On the other hand, she feels oppressed by her future husband, who thinks he can decide over her life. Sorrel is eager to leave home and presses Dara Mood to take the fifty acres and the cheque offered by Red Raftery (ORH 51). He, however, prefers hard work instead of handouts and refuses to take the land, which makes Sorrel furious, because she does not need him to tell her what she can do (ORH 52). The last straw is that Dara Mood admits that he cannot abide Sorrel’s father, which hurts her feelings, because her father’s blood also runs through her body, which implies that Dara Mood dislikes Sorrel either (ORH 53). As a consequence, Sorrel asks him to leave and the conflict ends in their separation (ORH 53). It is surprising that Sorrel prefers living with her brutal father to living with a proud husband. She is in a conflict of fighting for freedom, leaving Raftery’s Hill and not giving up her independence by marrying Dara Mood. As a result, she is caught on the Hill, just like her grandmother who is also unable to leave that place.

Maxwell states that “[despite] – or perhaps because of – her [...] experience of [...] incest, Dinah seeks to throw a benign gloss on Red’s rape of Sorrel” (Maxwell 473) when she claims that “[ud’s] not the end a the world just because hands was laid on [her] thah shouldn’t” (ORH 57). According to Maxwell, such a defence of criminal deeds in favour of domestic unity happens in order to avoid disclosure of the dysfunctional family (Maxwell 473). Dinah’s statement can be justified rather easily. She regrets not having married just because of the father-daughter incest and her pregnancy. She does not want Sorrel to make the same mistake. She should try to carry

on and have a normal and hopefully better life with a loving and caring husband instead of vegetating in her own family.

At the end of the play Sorrel tells Red Raftery that he does not need to worry, because she has sorted out Dara Mood (ORH 59). This means that she avoids the chance of leaving Raftery's Hill, which agitates Dinah. "Sorrel showed no thanks for the care and safekeeping provided up to that point by Dinah" (E. Carr 146). She should not wallow in self-pity just because of the rape. From Dinah's point of view, Sorrel is the only one who could have made something of her life and escaped from home. However, everything will stay the way it was before. The cycle of violence and abuse is not broken.

5.2.2.6 Ded – Coping with Being the ‘Odd One Out’

The last one in the cycle of violence is Ded Raftery, because he is the marginalised family member – the so-called 'odd one out'. He is in his mid-thirties, big shouldered, long-haired, bearded, filthy and his clothes are covered in cow dung (ORH 7). His favourite activity is playing the fiddle (ORH 7). "Marginalised from the family unit through terror of his father, he is literally driven out from the social and familial space to live like an animal in the shed" (Maxwell 469). Only Sorrel and Dinah allow him to come into the house occasionally, give him some food from the kitchen (ORH 8) and offer him alcohol, cigarettes and sweets to calm him down (ORH 9, 36). Eamonn Carr notes that Ded is marginalised due to living in the cowshed and eating his food with dirty hands. This de-humanisation seems to be his way of protecting himself (E. Carr 143) most probably from his dominating father. According to Maxwell, the pronunciation of Ded's name (dead) points at his de-humanised or "deadened" existence (Maxwell 469).

According to Toth et al. "children traumatized by aggression and violence within their families, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse, are at heightened risk of poor mental health outcomes" (Toth et al. 351). Child maltreatment may have dramatic impacts on a child's development (Toth et al. 352). This may explain Ded's state of mind and his withdrawal from the family. He has been treated badly by his father and is totally terrified of him. Assisting his father with the rape of his sister (ORH 49) also left its marks on Ded's psyche. Ded appears to suffer from post-traumatic stress

disorder, which causes “flashbacks and other troubling and unwanted memories” (Toth et al. 356).

Red Raftery has the “ability to strike terror into the heart of his son, Ded” (E. Carr 141). Only when coaxed, Ded does accept to enter the house, when their father is not at home, and he always assures himself: “Ya sure there’s ne’er a sign of him?” (ORH 7). Full of fear, he sits with an eye on the door and if he hears any noise, he jumps totally terrified (ORH 8, 9, 23). Sorrel tries to make Ded stay with the family again and asks when he is going to live with them again. His prompt answer is: “When Daddy dies” (ORH 10). Ded’s reply underlines his conviction to avoid any contact with his father.

The play presents one rather long conversation between Ded and his father, when Ded feels extremely uneasy and just wants to leave the house and hide in the cowshed again (ORH 22-25). Forcefully, Red Raftery commands his son to come in (“or do I have to go ouh and drag ya in?” (ORH 23)), while Ded tries to avoid any contact. Because of his nervousness and fear Ded blinks, shakes and looks down (ORH 23). After the exchange of a few sentences, he desperately asks if he can go back to the shed (ORH 23). He is very afraid of giving wrong answers which may lead to making his father furious. So, he asks what the right answer is (ORH 23). Red Raftery confronts him and indicates that he knows about Ded’s visits in the house (ORH 24). Surprisingly, his father is not upset about that:

Would ya listen would ya, I’m glad ya come in the house even if ud’s only the middle of the nigh, I’m glad ya drink me whiskey, I’m glad ya smoke in the cowshed. [...] Ya know why I’m glad? Because ud manes you’re noh a total animal yeh (ORH 24).

Red’s statement leaves his son totally confused, because his father keeps changing the rules. Ded always tries to stick to the rules in order not to make his father lose control.

So am I to smoke or noh to smoke? Whah? Am I to come in the house or noh? Whah? Am I to drink your whiskey or noh? Whah’re ya sayin, Daddy? Just lay down the rules, don’t kape changin them. Don’t. I don’t know whah to do to make ya happy. And I want me mother, I miss her fierce so I do. She’d kape ya away from me, she promised me she would. I’d liefer she’d pulled me into Heaven after her (ORH 24).

Ded is confused and misses his mother, because she was the one who cared for him. When his mother was around she defended her son and Ded did not have to worry about his father’s brutality. Therefore, his mother’s loss was a shock for Ded and he seems to be the only one who really misses her. He has never been able to accept his mother’s death, because he did not have permission to attend her funeral (ORH 49), which is an essential part of grieving, valediction and coping with death (see Chapter 4.2.3.3).

Ded does not only suffer from his mother's death and his father's cruelty, but mainly from Dinah's rape in the cowshed, because he was forced to aid Red Raftery in committing the crime. He cannot cope with these memories and accuses his father: "I was the wan has to do ih all. I was the wan had to take Dinah to the cowshed, member thah, do ya, Daddy?" (ORH 49). When Dinah blames her brother for being at least partly responsible for the rape, he stresses that he never abused his sister and "[he] done nothin to [her] only clane up the mess after Daddy" (ORH 38). He feels inferior and powerless compared with his father's omnipotence. Ded does not have the right to make his own decisions about how to act. "I was only doin whah Daddy tould me, buh I never done nothin to [Dinah] sure I didn't" (ORH 49). As a consequence, Ded is not very welcome in the house (ORH 37). Both Dinah and Sorrel are disappointed in Ded. Why did he not help her when she needed him most? Ded is just too scared of his father but deep inside longs to be rid of him (ORH 37). After the sexual abuse of Dinah and Sorrel, Ded worries that he might be next to be harmed by his father, and so he never wants to return to the house (ORH 49-50).

In brief, Ded is the final element in the cycle of violence starting with Shalome, continuing with Red, Dinah as well as Sorrel. The family members suffer from physical, psychological and sexual abuse without being able to cope with their traumatic incidents. Everyone vents their anger on the person inferior to them, however, nobody can improve their emotional state.

5.2.3 Withdrawal from Society – A Coping Strategy

In her play *On Raftery's Hill* Marina Carr presents a bizarre feeling of claustrophobia – "the fear of enclosed spaces" (Rachmann 163). The characters appear to be entrapped on the Raftery's farm due to psychological terror, suppression, rejection and traumatic experiences. They are not physically forced to stay in this place, but it seems as if there is an inner bond that cannot be broken and hinders them from leaving Raftery's Hill. Eamonn Carr notes that in

On Raftery's Hill the grotesque is the reality of their living habits; it is the trap and the violation. This I suppose is one of the play's great difficulties. The claustrophobia and the confinement of the play resulted in many people feeling uneasy because of the play's thrust in performance (E. Carr 143).

The character that is most obviously desperate to escape from Raftery's Hill is the grandmother, Shalome. There are numerous occasions when she tries to flee from the farm and leave the family behind (ORH 10, 25, 27, 29, 47, 56). "Goodbye Raftery's

Hill. I shall not miss you” (ORH 10), Shalome proclaims, however, she never gets any further than the end of the road (ORH 13). Something keeps her from actually leaving the farm, because Kinneygar is “only twenty miles down the road. If [she] really wanted to go there [she would] go” (ORH 47). Shalome longs to meet her father again, who in fact is already dead. She preserves the picture of a loving father in her mind and represses her memories of an abusive father and their incestuous relationship, because living on Raftery’s Hill seems to be hopeless. Her son has become a brutal family dictator, but there is no other place for Shalome to stay. Nobody would care for her in Kinneygar, while on the farm there is at least a minimal amount of affection. As a consequence, her attempts to escape are never successful, which creates a feeling of entrapment.

Red Raftery, Shalome’s son, is the head of the family and appears to be rather satisfied with his life on the Hill. But appearances can be deceiving. As the child of an incestuous relationship, with only little love from his supposed father and a mother whose mind is deteriorating, he has turned into an unbalanced man and an aggressive father. He only leaves the farm to hunt, which leads one to the assumption that he feels uneasy meeting people in the village. He asks Dara Mood about news from the village (ORH 18) and thinks that there is only trouble in there (ORH 20). Red Raftery seems to hide on the farm and avoids any contact with the people from the village who only spread rumours, like they do with the Brophy family (ORH 18-20). Red does not want Dara Mood to believe any word of what the people say, because it is all gossip and a man’s name and reputation could be destroyed (ORH 19-20). He fears that people might find out about the incest and that he could lose his reputation as a successful farmer because of all the rumours. While coping with a difficult childhood, he is unable to build social relations and starts abusing his children to have at least some (brutal) contact with them.

Dinah, the eldest Raftery child, also suffers from the abuse. She has endured her father’s lust in order to protect her child, Sorrel. She is depressed, because she never had the chance to follow her dreams and be independent. Dinah blames her father for the fact that she will never be able to leave this place: “No spring for me nor summer either. I had no summer in me life, Daddy. Just auhum, allas auhum. Christ, I’m goin to die on this Hill” (ORH 27). Dinah’s inability to escape from the farm creates a claustrophobic feeling. Full of distress she asks Dara Mood, what she has to look forward to (ORH 55).

Sorrel has the chance to marry a decent man, Dinah, however, broke up with her boyfriend because of her pregnancy in order not to cause bad rumours and destroy her father's reputation (ORH 55). Since Sorrel decides against marriage in favour of staying on Raftery's Hill, Dinah is even more depressed, because all she has ever lived for was to give her little one a better life. Dinah resigns herself to the possibility that none of them may ever be able to leave that place.

Sorrel, the young one of the Raftery family, appears to be the only one who realistically has the chance to escape from the Hill. She has a caring boyfriend, Dara Mood, who wants to marry her. Until the sexual abuse takes place, she has been the happiest family member. However, after the rape she is confused and thinks her future husband would not understand her. During the conversation between her father and Dara Mood, she feels oppressed by Dara. "There's natin goin on here except you decidin things in swell a pride thah concerns me" (ORH 53). He fears for her in this house and he cannot wait until Sorrel lives with him (ORH 32). Sorrel, however, claims that Dara has ruined everything (ORH 54), which he cannot understand. If he had not tried to make decisions for his future wife, Sorrel would not have felt oppressed and most probably would have agreed to the marriage. The grandmother tries to explain the situation to Dara:

You'll make someone very happy Dara Mood, but it won't be Sorrel because you see we're strange creatures up here on the Hill. And strange creatures, aberrations like us, don't make for lifetime companions (ORH 50).

The young woman is confused and fears further abuse in her new home. She does not know what to do and decides to stay with her family. She even seems happy to please her father when telling him that "[she] sorted [Dara] ouh for ever more" (ORH 59). Without noticing it, Sorrel is entrapped on Raftery's Hill just like the rest of the family.

Red Raftery's only son, Ded, is the marginalised and de-humanised family member and the one who precisely illustrates the claustrophobic atmosphere on Raftery's Hill. He prefers living in the cowshed to the house because of his father's aggression and viciousness (ORH 10, 50). Traumatized by being forced to assist at his sister's rape (ORH 49), he feels safer in company of animals than with his own family. He is totally unable to cope with rejection and his cruel experiences. The cowshed is supposed to be the only safe shelter for him. He has never been put into a lunatic asylum, maybe because of his father's bad conscience. Red Raftery surely knows that he is to blame for his son's state. Ded will never leave the farm, because he is dependent on somebody caring for him. Therefore, he hides in the cowshed and avoids his father.

It has been shown that the Rafterys are mentally unable to separate themselves from the farm and from their family. The cruel deed of sexual abuse and incest unifies the family members so that nobody ever manages to leave the Hill. None of them wants their secret to be known by the people from the village in order to keep the status of having an intact family life. The cycle of incest and abuse seems to continue, which creates a feeling of hopelessness and claustrophobia. In Dinah's words, they will die on Raftery's Hill (ORH 27).

5.2.4 Alcoholism – A Coping Strategy

In the play *On Raftery's Hill* the characters have to cope with memories of traumatic incidents. Drinking alcohol, especially whiskey, helps them to endure their emotional pain and gives them a reason to carry on living. Alcohol can have a calming effect on people who feel like prisoners of certain circumstances. The consumption of alcohol can help to cope with traumatic experiences – at least for a while – and belies an improvement in the situation. It can, however, worsen the circumstances and may lead to violence, which gives the impression of still having some control over the situation. Violence “usually refers to the most severe types of physical aggression” (DeWall et al. 18). Emotional or psychological violence can be referred to as forms of non-physical aggression (DeWall et al. 18). If violence occurs in a relationship, the partner's fundamental hopes and expectations for a close relationship are destroyed. It is a paradox that a great number of abused spouses remain with their aggressive partners and downplay the abuse in order to protect themselves (Arriaga et al. 367-368). Ihsan M Salloum defines violence as

a significant problem among some individuals with psychiatric disorders and alcoholism or other substance use disorders. Violent behaviours such as homicide, assaults and domestic violence cause considerable suffering for families and society. [...] The association between violence, alcoholism and male gender is well documented (Salloum 1-3).

According to James J. Collins et al. domestic violence is an ancient problem. It has been established that violence within the family is often related to drinking (Collins et al. 387-388). “Substance use by domestic violence victims has been suggested to be a response to the violence they suffer” (Collins et al. 389). This means that drinking is often used as a coping strategy after abuse. Judith Roizen presents several studies of alcohol-related violence, such as rape (Roizen 18-19). There is a relation between alcohol use and severe aggression, however, not only the assailants but also the victims of rape may consume alcohol. It is said that almost half of the violent attacks and sexual

abuses between spouses involve the consumption of alcohol – either of the offender or the victim or both (Roizen 31-33).

Alcohol is, for instance, used to calm down Ded. His sister Dinah offers him some whiskey: “D’ya want some a’ Daddy’s whiskey? Calm ya down” (ORH 9). His father knows that his son drinks his whiskey despite the prohibition but accepts it, because it proves that he is still a human being (ORH 24). Red Raftery rarely offers Ded a drink: “Come on sih in, have a whiskey till we warm ya up” (ORH 48). Ded suffers most from the loss of their mother. In addition, he has to cope with his memories of Dinah’s rape, which caused him to become slightly insane. Alcohol seems to bring some pleasure and quietness in his uneasy life.

One way to soothe Dinah’s emotional pain is the consumption of alcohol. It is interesting that Red Raftery asks Dinah if she was drinking upstairs (ORH 27). Dinah’s sarcastic answer is: “No, I was saying me rosary. A cuurse I was drinkin upstairs, how else could I face the lug a you” (ORH 28). Dinah admits that she needs alcohol to endure the desperate situation.

When Dinah (ORH 27, 55) and Sorrel (ORH 16) drink alcohol, it appears as if it is totally normal to have alcoholic beverages at any time of the day. Their father does not prevent them from drinking, he even offers them some whiskey and makes them drink. Without any whiskey they would not be able to endure their terrifying father and their absurd life on the Hill. Alcohol seems to make life at least a bit easier.

Like Ded, Shalome is also calmed by whiskey. The grandmother repeatedly tries to flee from the farm and reach Kinneygar. All family members are used to her insane habit and know that she will never manage to really leave Raftery’s Hill, because she always stops at the end of the lane. One day Red prevents her from heading to Kinneygar and says: “Shut the duur, Mother, have a drink before your travels” (ORH 25). Alcohol helps to make her stay at the farm and to forget her longing for her father for a while.

Red Raftery, the brutal father, also depends on alcohol. Whiskey is offered in social occasions, such as visits from his friend Isaac (ORH 41) or Sorrel’s future husband Dara Mood (ORH 17). However, it seems that his body demands the alcohol, because he forcefully orders Sorrel to prepare some whiskey when he comes home from hunting (ORH 14-15). Moreover, Red Raftery uses whiskey for his own benefit, for example, to coax Dinah into having sexual intercourse with him, which she, however, refuses (ORH

22). On the night of Sorrel's rape, she accuses her father of being drunk, which he denies (ORH 34). His claim of being sober is implausible, because he drinks all day and must at least be tipsy. Both offender and victim are drunk when the rape occurs, which illustrates Roizen's argument.

It can be seen that all members of the Raftery family are either slightly or heavily dependent on alcohol. It helps them to somehow cope with their traumatic incidents by calming them down or increasing their violence. Moreover, it makes them lose their inhibitions to commit incest and domestic violence on their children.

In conclusion, in her play *On Raftery Hill* Marina Carr presents a dysfunctional family whose members suffer from physical but mainly emotional pain. Most characters are sexually abused and have to cope with incest, an imbalance of dominance and inferiority, rejection and jealousy. They think that alcohol and their own withdrawal from society may help improve their situation. In this they are sadly mistaken.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this diploma thesis has highlighted major forms of dealing with memories exemplified by the Irish plays: Enda Walsh's *The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom* and *Bedbound*, Jimmy Murphy's *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road*, as well as Collins's film adaptation *Kings*, and Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*. The aim of this thesis has been the investigation of how the characters' minds are presented in the various plays. In order to analyse these aspects, it was important to provide some basic information about the different ways of coping with trauma and memories.

After a short introductory section, the terms "memory" and "trauma" were defined in Chapter 2. In brief, human memory is a complex system that is able to process, store and retrieve data. Memory can be affected by traumatic incidents, which means that some details of the events are remembered, while others may even be totally forgotten. Trauma patients may suffer from flashbacks, nightmares and post-traumatic stress disorder. Trauma initially helps to escape the awful experience; however, it also hinders people from going on with their lives.

Chapter 3 dealt with three plays by Enda Walsh. The bond between these plays is the coping strategy of storytelling. In *The Walworth Farce*, the farce is a re-telling of the departure from Ireland and is in fact a therapeutic device to help Dinny. His sons suffer from being imprisoned and are unable to live a proper life. This is best illustrated by Sean, who has the chance to start a normal life outside their flat and yet cannot leave without Blake or Hayley. He would be all alone and he is too afraid to risk starting anew.

The second play under consideration, *The New Electric Ballroom*, shows the sisters' struggle to cope with unrequited love, jealousy and loneliness. Storytelling helps them to open up to each other. While the sisters re-enact their experiences to give their lives at least some justification, the truth about Patsy's father is finally revealed. The women hide from society to avoid the gossip and feel safe in their house with only their youngest sister Ada and Patsy as links to the world outside. Patsy, on the other hand, needs the women's company, even though they dislike his presence. In addition to storytelling, religion and their belief in God are presented as coping strategies. The women's faith creates a feeling of love, comfort and support, as well as protection.

The third play by Enda Walsh, *Bedbound*, also concentrates on storytelling as a way to cope with memories. The daughter suffers from polio and finds some comfort in retelling the story of her infection with the virus. Her father is reliant on this coping strategy to overcome his feelings of guilt and shame because of failure, murder and negligence. Not only storytelling but also withdrawal from society and personal ambition help the father to cope with his experiences. By hiding from the world he manages to avoid any feeling of failure and the people's gossip, because he has always wanted to become a successful and respectable salesman.

In his plays Walsh presents characters who have been traumatised by events, such as murder, unrequited love, physical and mental illnesses, and only manage to cope with their situations by withdrawal. Instead of living a social life, they concentrate on themselves, cloister themselves away and never leave the safety of their homes. Storytelling somehow helps them to handle their memories.

Chapter 4 concentrated on the five friends in Jimmy Murphy's play *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* and its screen adaptation *Kings* going through the various stages of the mourning process. It can be shown how diverse the ways of grieving can be and that not all of the five stages have to be undergone. Thus, mourning is an individual process. Jap exemplified best how he went from the stages of denial and valediction to the acceptance of Jackie's death. Maurteen is the only one who dares to start again, yet sadly ends up stagnating in his miserable life. All of the friends suffer from feelings of guilt and partly blame themselves for their friend's suicide. Alcohol plays a major role in this story. It has been shown how alcoholism influences the men's behaviour, leading to violence or suicide, and how this drug is used to try and deal with the tricky problem of death.

Chapter 5 investigated the traumatised characters in Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*. The major themes of the play are inferiority, indignity, dysfunctional families, domestic violence, death, (sexual) abuse, incest as well as stagnation. In this play a cycle of violence is presented, which means that one character becomes a victim, starts violating inferior family member(s) and therefore, becomes a perpetrator himself/herself. The characters are victims and perpetrators at the same time, because they are unable to cope with their traumatic experiences. The atmosphere between family members is rather tense, unpleasant and even a bit scary because of the father's brutality. Sexual abuse and incest lead to withdrawal from society and to taking refuge in alcoholism. Sorrel is the

only one who might have had a real chance to leave the Hill through marriage, however, she is not successful in the end. All characters stay together in their misery on Raftery's Hill.

Two recurring themes in almost all the plays discussed are withdrawal and alcoholism. While a claustrophobic atmosphere can be found in Enda Walsh's and Marina Carr's plays, alcohol consumption mainly occurs in *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* and *On Raftery's Hill*. It seems that traumatised people find it challenging to talk to others and to be integrated in society. They prefer the easier way of hiding away from reality and constructing their own small world, which is a mixture of truth and imagination. Alcoholic beverages make it easier to accept their awful situation and make them forget their traumatic memories for a while, however, they do not eradicate the problem of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In short, all of the characters under consideration have to deal with loss, death, feelings of guilt by means of coping strategies. The playwrights leave the audience with the impression that the characters stagnate in their miserable circumstances, which shall underline the tragic situations. Just like in real life, it is challenging to start anew after a traumatic experience. People usually rely on professional psychological help in order to carry on with their lives.

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8. APPENDIX

SEQUENCE ANALYSIS: *Kings* by Tom Collins

0	Opening Credits	
1	Emigration	Conamara (Ireland), 1977. Boats sailing on the sea and people leaving Ireland by ship. Also on the ferry are six Irish friends with suitcases who drink beer.
2	Wake up Jap	London, 30 years later: Git has a nightmare about a fast-approaching tube train in a tunnel. When he wakes up he thinks of his friend Jackie, who lost his life in an accident. He shaves, wakes up his flatmate Jap, who seems to be a heavy drinker, and helps him get properly dressed. A flashback shows the six friends on the boat taking a picture of themselves.
3	Back to Ireland	Git and Jap are on a bus. Another flashback illustrates people on a truck who look for workers and pick Joe, one of the six friends. Jap dreams of going back to Ireland and of leaving their awful flat. At his construction site Joe reads about Jackie's death in the <i>Irish Post</i> and snorts cocaine. In a flashback Jackie is presented with his cup.
4	A Wreath	At a fruit and vegetable market Jap and Git meet their friend Shay. Jap steals a wreath from a cemetery in order to take it to mass, because they cannot afford their own.
5	Máirtín	In a London flat Máirtín drinks a bottle of alcohol, while his wife irons his shirt. She loves her husband and she does not want to lose him. Their daughter appears on the stairs. Máirtín joins his mates Jap and Git in the pub for a few pints. Máirtín gives up

		drinking that very day, because Jackie gave up too. This results in Jap making fun of him, because he does not understand his decision. Meanwhile Shay picks up Micil, Jackie's father, from the airport.
6	The Flat	Máirtín, Jap and Git fetch Jackie's things from his flat. Jap continuously talks about returning to Ireland. Git thinks about Micil and remarks that losing a child must be hard. This time Máirtín has a vision of dead Jackie sitting on a chair. In a flashback Jackie calls Máirtín in the middle of the night, because he needs some help. His friend, however, does not have time for his problem.
7	Micil	Micil and Shay are alone in a hall with the coffin. The father is sad and lonely. Shay looks for the others, who arrive shortly after carrying two boxes with Jackie's left possessions. Micil wants the men to split the things between them and admits missing the fifth friend Joe. Then they go to church by car.
8	Mass	Hiding in his car Joe watches the others carry the coffin into the church. Holding a wreath Joe almost enters, however, he has a bad conscience and leaves instead. A flashback explains that Micil asked Joe to look after his son in England. All of a sudden Git exits the church.
9	Father's Watch	<p>Joe observes Git walking to a pawnbroker's. Unfortunately, he only receives twenty pounds for his father's watch. At church they guess where Joe might be. Later they leave the church carrying the coffin. Meanwhile, Joe goes into the pawn shop. Joe is lost in thought and throws the wreath into the pond. He sees an image of Jackie and another flashback shows Joe falling from the sailing boat into the sea.</p> <p>Micil returns alone to Ireland, because none of the friends want to attend the funeral. The father is grateful that Git was with his son on the night of his death, which makes Git sad. A hearse</p>

		takes Micil and the coffin to the airport.
10	The Pub	Máirtín stops at the cash machine and gives Git a bank note. They enter a pub and Jap still cannot accept that Máirtín, who is talking to his wife on his mobile, refuses alcoholic drinks. Git confides that Máirtín hits his wife Maggie, which makes Jap furious, because he was once in love with her. Jap and Máirtín have an argument and insult their respective wives, while Git tries to calm them down and reminds them of Jackie's death.
11	I'll not be back	<p>At the airport the coffin is loaded onto the aircraft. While Shay waits for Micil, he gives all his remaining pounds to the driver since he will not return to England any more. In exchange, the father receives a rosary.</p> <p>At the same time Jap, Git and Máirtín eat at a fast food chain restaurant. Máirtín tells the others about calling Alcoholics Anonymous in order to solve his drinking problem. Although Jap makes fun of him again, there is a kind of reunion and Jap accepts that Maggie is Máirtín's wife.</p>
12	Let go	<p>At the airport Micil is in conversation with Shay. Micil blames himself for Jackie's move to England and his tragic death. In a flashback Jackie works for Shay, however he arrives late again at the market. So Shay has to fire him for unreliability. Micil advises Shay to forget his dreams about returning to Ireland, because his wife and son are in London and his home is there. The father states that he saw Joe at the church and knows that guilt was his reason for not entering. He gives Shay the last of his English pounds to organise a good night for Jackie for the friends. After hugging Shay Micil leaves.</p> <p>Meanwhile Jap and Git purchase some whiskey and consume it on the street. Git thinks about Jackie and suffers from feelings of guilt, because they should have stopped Jackie from moving out of their flat. According to Jap, Jackie 'had driven them mad'</p>

		<p>since he was sober.</p> <p>In the meantime Joe enters the church and sits down in the confessional, takes drugs and imagines he is with Jackie. A flashback shows the six friends on a boat. Joe falls into the sea and is saved immediately by Jackie. He confesses that he was wrong to make money and become successful without thinking of his rescuer, Jackie. At the same time Shay watches Micil's plane take off.</p>
13	The Wake	<p>On Kilburn High Road Joe enters "The Conamara" and sees an image of his friends including Jackie. He glances into the side room, which is reserved for the wake, and talks to Bridie, the barmaid. On the street Jap and Git are woken up by two police officers and have to leave. They walk into the pub where Joe is already waiting for them. Joe apologises for not attending the mass. Jap consumes beer and blames Joe for having forgotten his friends and for not speaking Irish. Joe is successful with fifty men working for him. Playing darts, Jap reproaches Joe for not employing Irishmen. Shay is also on his way to the pub going by tube. He joins his drunk friends in singing an Irish rebel song and tells Joe that Micil asked for him.</p>
14	On Our Own	<p>Annoyed, Joe goes to the toilet, snorts cocaine and offers Git some drugs, which he refuses. Git informs Joe of his plan to start a business with Jap back in Ireland and seeks some advice. Joe returns Git's watch, which he pawned.</p>
15	Leaving	<p>Still in the toilet, Joe has a flashback of his leaving the flat and his five friends behind.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Máirtín talks with Maggie and they drink coffee. She dislikes his friends, because of their permanent drinking and for encouraging her husband to drink. In her opinion, getting sober was the best decision Jackie ever made. She threatens to leave Máirtín if he goes out that night. He takes Jackie's boxes</p>

		and the whiskey out of his truck and leaves.
16	Merry Men	In the pub, the friends are talking and Jap shows off. He claims to be a successful foreman with twenty men working for him. Shay's profession is selling fruit and vegetables on the market. He repeatedly has to calm the situation between Joe and Jap.
17	The Tunnel	Máirtín is on his way to the pub, taking the tube. At the tube station, he pours half of the whiskey on the tracks in memory of Jackie. Arriving at the pub the others sing rebel songs. Another flashback presents Git and Jackie playing pool. Git thinks that Jackie is weird for being sober. The five men drink to Jackie – even Máirtín drinks whiskey despite his resolution.
18	Home	<p>In the flashback Jackie hugs Git, leaves the pub and heads for the tube station.</p> <p>In “The Conamara” the men get more and more drunk and dance around. Joe pays for a round for those guests who feel offended by their actions. Outside Joe advises Máirtín to go home in order not to lose another beloved person. Máirtín knows that Joe could not take his friends with him to Manchester and does not blame him. A flashback shows Joe's site, where Jackie and Git ask for a job. Joe, however, does not even acknowledge his friends. Inside, Shay does not understand why everyone wants to go “home” to Ireland. In his opinion, London is their real home now. This insults Jap who still feels Irish. Shay leaves the pub and Joe admits that he could not face Micil. Joe says Shay can try out his new Mercedes, but Git prevents Shay from driving in his condition in order to avoid another death. They all have some shots to Jackie. The flashback shows Jackie leaving Git and Git following his friend.</p>
19	Slipped	The flashback continues and Git is in the tube station. Back in the pub, Joe is blamed for not meeting them for fifteen years. He should have hired Jackie, which was impossible due to his

		unreliability. Suddenly Joe wants to know everything about Jackie's death. While Jap insists that it was an accident, Git, who witnessed the accident, tells the truth. The story is told in flashback. When the train approached, Jackie let himself fall on the tracks and committed suicide. He told Micil that he slipped to make it easier for him. Jap has severe problems accepting that Jackie killed himself. Outside, he admits that his life is awful as well, but he has never thought about suicide.
20	The Fight	Joe brings more whiskey, they sing and drink. Git blames Jap for promising streets of gold in England and making them move. Jap and Joe argue again, because Joe does not have any Irish employees. Joe claims that Jap has been too lazy to get a proper job and that it is his own fault. Joe feels guilty for turning his back on Jackie when he needed him. Git reveals the truth about Jap's profession and that he is unemployed. Before Joe leaves the pub, he says he wished it was Jap who was killed by the tube train and crumples the old picture of the group. Shay leaves as well.
21	Gang is Gone	Jap is convinced that it is not all his fault. He wants to drink with Máirtín, but he refuses more drinks and leaves.
22	Wake is over	Jap is all alone in the side room of the pub holding Jackie's helmet. He cries bitterly and talks to the deceased. Suddenly Jackie appears and tells Jap that the wake is over and that you cannot go further sometimes. Jackie makes it clear he will not come back again. Outside Git explains to Máirtín and Shay that Jackie could be still alive if he had had anyone to support him. That is why he returns to Jap.
23	He did it	Jap looks at the picture again, while Git helps Jap put on his jacket. Jap says that he knew of Jackie's suicide, but he did not want to admit it and he hated Jackie for doing it.
24	Kings	Micil arrives at the airport in Galway, Ireland. Jackie's coffin is

		unloaded. In London Jap and Git are on their way home and Jap says that they could have done it. They could have been Kings. Both keep on walking and disappear in the streets of London.
	Closing Credits	

ABSTRACT IN GERMAN (Deutsche Zusammenfassung)

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit „Erinnerung“ in zeitgenössischen irischen Theaterstücken. Dazu werden beispielhaft Werke der Autoren Enda Walsh, Jimmy Murphy und Marina Carr einer Analyse unterzogen, wobei der Fokus auf solchen Charakteren liegt, die traumatische Erfahrungen zu verarbeiten haben. Eine analytische Darstellung der Auslöser für dieses Verhalten sowie der unterschiedlichen Verarbeitungsmethoden der betroffenen Personen sind die Ergebnisse dieser Arbeit.

Es soll untersucht werden, auf welche Art und Weise die Autoren ihre Charaktere darstellen, um deren seelisches Befinden auszudrücken. Es wurden zeitgenössische irische Stücke gewählt, da hier besonders jene Charaktere portraitiert werden, die Schicksalsschläge erlitten haben und ihren harten Alltag durch Alkoholkonsum und Rückzug zu bewältigen versuchen.

Mit Hilfe von Literatur und aktuellen Forschungsergebnissen der Psychologie werden die Charaktere der irischen Stücke *The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom*, *Bedbound*, *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* gemeinsam mit der Verfilmung *Kings*, sowie *On Raftery's Hill* im Detail untersucht. Die Protagonisten dieser Stücke erleben psychische Ausnahmesituationen, die zu Verhaltensauffälligkeiten wie Alkoholismus und Gewalt führen.

Die Ergebnisse der Analyse sind zwar vielfältig, zeigen aber auch klare Parallelen. Als Auslöser für die Traumata agieren vor allem Tod, Mord und Suizid, aber auch unerfüllte Träume, unerwiderte Liebe, Krankheit, (häusliche) Gewalt, Vergewaltigung und Inzest sowie Unterdrückung und zerrüttete Familienverhältnisse. Die Verarbeitungsstrategien beschränken sich zumeist auf bloßen Rückzug, Alkoholismus und Versuche der Resozialisierung in Form von Geschichtenerzählen. Zum Teil hilft auch die Hinwendung zu traditionellen Normen wie Religion und patriarchalen Strukturen bei der Bewältigung der Traumata. Bei einigen Charakteren erfüllt auch eine Fortführung der Gewalt die Aufgabe, negative Erlebnisse zu verarbeiten.

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